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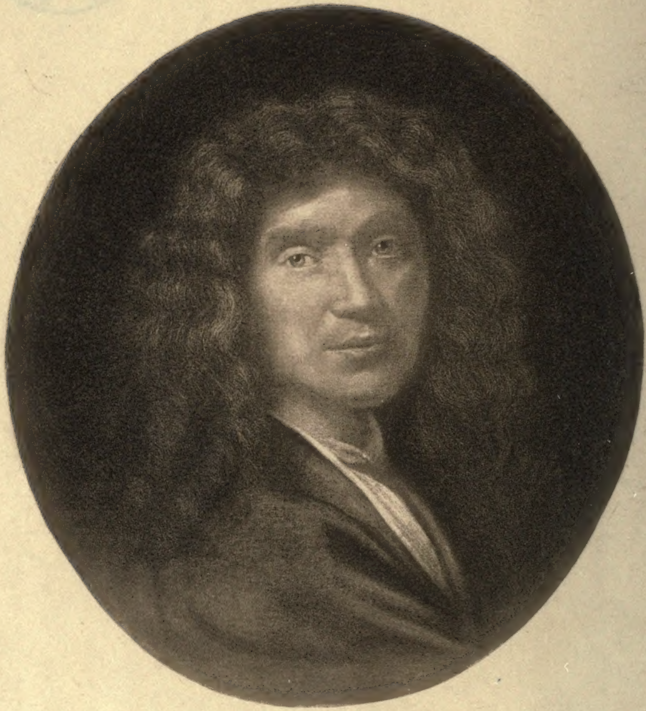

THE PLAYS OF MOLIÈRE

TRANSLATED BY
KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

THE MISANTHROPE
LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME

VOLUME ONE

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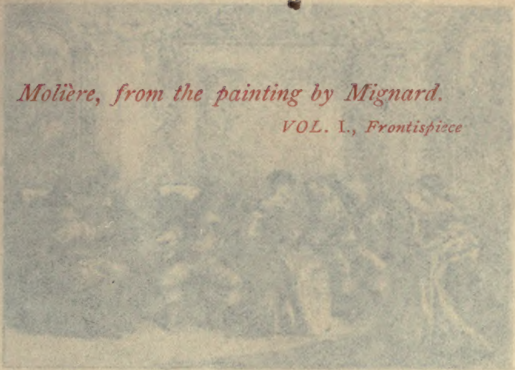

Molière, from the painting by Mignard.
VOL. I., *Frontispiece*

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1909

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CONTENTS

PAGE

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE 7

INTRODUCTION:

Preface to the Works of Molière, by H. de Balzac 9

Criticism on Molière, by C. A. Sainte-Beuve 27

THE MISANTHROPE 45

LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME 159

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE
MOLIÈRE, AFTER THE PAINTING BY MIGNARD *Frontispiece*

"THE WORLD VISITS HIS DINNERS, AND NOT HIM" *Vignette on Title*
Le Misanthrope, Act II., Sc. v.

"MESSIEURS, THIS IS GOING TOO FAR. LET THE MATTER DROP, I BEG OF YOU" 71
Le Misanthrope, Act I., Sc. ii.

"THEN DO YOU HOLD ME GUILTY BECAUSE MEN LOVE ME?" 73
Le Misanthrope, Act II., Sc. i.

"A LITTLE FARTHER BACK, MADAME" 272
Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, Act III., Sc. xix.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

SURELY the translation of a great writer can have but one purpose: to present him in such a manner that his reader in a language not his own shall obtain a correct general idea of his work. A student of Molière will go to the original.

The preface here given is the one which Balzac wrote for the edition of Molière brought out by him during his youthful enterprise as a publisher. The criticism which follows is by Sainte-Beuve; and the comments on the plays in this and succeeding volumes are gathered from various authors (Voltaire, Victor Cousin, Sainte-Beuve, Émile Faguet, Charles Louandre, etc.), and are here put together as may best answer the purpose of briefly presenting Molière and his work to the English reader.

K. P. W.

INTRODUCTION

PREFACE TO THE WORKS OF MOLIÈRE

By H. DE BALZAC

LOUIS XIV. said one day to Boileau: —

"Who is the first among the great men who have adorned my reign?"

"Molière, Sire," was the reply.

Two centuries have confirmed the justice of that answer, which the ages still to come will ratify.

If it were possible to reform men by making them blush for their follies, their defects, their vices, what a perfect society this splendid legislator would have founded! He would have banished from the bosom of his nation falsehood, cant, deception, jealousy, — sometimes insane, oftener cruel, — the senile love of old men, hatred of humanity, coquetry, back-biting, self-conceit; disproportioned marriages, base avarice, chicanery, corruption; the heedless frivolity of magistrates, the pettiness which makes men aspire to be greater than they are, the arrogant empiricism of doctors, and the laughable impostures of false piety. Such is a brief summary of the follies and vices which Molière attacked without ever ceasing to be humorous, natural, and varied.

The history of the life, all too short, of this celebrated man[1] does not need, in order to make it interesting, the frivolous details and gossiping stories which have hitherto disfigured it. We shall here relate, as to his personal life, only such facts as have been shown, up to the present time, to be true. As for his immortal works, we here reprint them; civilized nations have judged them, and we refrain from all comment on their value.

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[1] It is painfully interesting to know that Molière and Balzac, the fathers of the "Comedy of Human Life" and of Realism, died at the same age: Molière at fifty-one years and one month; Balzac at fifty-one years and three months. There were strange likenesses in their lives. The fame of both was of little more than fifteen years' duration in their lifetime; both died of the toil to which their genius impelled them; and both are going down with ever brightening lustre to posterity. — Tr.

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin was born in Paris, in a house at the corner of the rue Saint-Honoré and the rue des Vieilles-Étuves, in January, 1622. His father, *valet de chambre* and upholsterer to the king, also a dealer in old furniture, and his mother, Marie Cressé, appear to have somewhat neglected his education. His mother died when he was ten years old, and at fourteen he knew little, outside of his father's trade, except reading and writing. At that age, however, his taste for study began to develop, and he asked to be sent to school. It was not without difficulty that his grandfather [probably his mother's father, Louis de Cressé] obtained permission for him to enter the college of Clermont, afterwards called Louis-le-Grand. There, he soon made up by application for the time he had lost. Among his schoolmates and friends were lads who in after years acquired celebrity: Chapelle, Bernier, Cyrano de Bergerac; also Armand de Bourbon, Prince de Conti, brother of the great Condé, whose subsequent faithful protection did honor to both of them.

Poquelin, whose genius was discerned by Gassendi (the adversary of Descartes), became the pupil of that celebrated professor, who brought him rapidly through all the branches of human knowledge. On leaving school he received from that philosopher the principles of pure and gentle ethics, from which he seldom deviated in the course of his life; after which he studied law at Orléans and was admitted to the bar, though it does not appear that he ever practised.

About this time the theatre was beginning to flourish. In the year 1630, Pierre Corneille first rescued it from barbarism and debasement. The passion of Cardinal Richelieu for the stage made a taste for comedy the fashion, and a goodly number of private societies gave dramatic representations.

Poquelin was admitted into an association of young men of good family who were enthusiasts for the stage, and who all had some talent for declamation. Before long this society eclipsed others, and the public gave it the somewhat emphatic name of "The Illustrious Theatre." It was then that Poquelin, full of a genius that spurred him on, gave himself up to his future vocation, and resolved to become both comedian and dramatic writer. After the fashion of the authors and actors of the time, he changed his name and now took that of Molière.

The civil wars which devastated France at this period and occupied all minds kept Molière long ignored; but he profited by this obscurity to cultivate his talent, and to prepare himself, by many abortive efforts, for the sublime works which were later to amaze the world. We cannot pass over in silence the names of certain farces which he composed and acted during a period of nearly twelve years, during which he travelled over France with a company of his own. "Le Docteur Amoureux," "Le Maître d'École," "Le Médecin Volant," "Les Docteurs Rivaux," and "La Jalousie du Barbouillé" were the first plays (all in the Italian style) by which he became known. These fugitive works, written in prose are lost; some, it is true, have lately been reprinted, but their authenticity is not, as yet, sufficiently proved. Tradition says, however, that traces of "Le Docteur Amoureux" and "La Jalousie du Barbouillé" may be found in "George Dandin" and "Le Médecin malgré lui."

The comedy of "L'Étourdi" was the first great piece in five acts which Molière produced. It was played at Lyon in 1653. This was the first step in his dramatic career which openly proclaimed him a man of genius. The lively wit, the whimsical comicality, and the dashing vigor with which he wrote the part of Mascarille made the public regard the play as a masterpiece, and drew such favor upon him that a rival company, then acting at Lyon, was entirely deserted and forced to disband.

Summoned in 1654 by his former schoolmate, the Prince de Conti, to Montpellier, where the latter was presiding over the *États* of Languedoc, he took with him a fairly complete company, consisting of the two brothers Gros-René (otherwise named du Parc, gentlemen of family) and the wife of one of them; Edmé Wilquin (otherwise de Brie); du Croisy a man of rank in la Beauce (who afterwards played Tartuffe with great success); Lagrange, a gentleman of Amiens; and the two comic actresses Madeleine Béjart, and Catherine de Brie, wife of Edmé Wilquin. Molière was at once put in charge of all theatrical performances, and salaries were paid to his company. He played before the prince at Montpellier, "L'Étourdi," "Le Dépit Amoureux," and "Les Précieuses Ridicules." The keen and lively satire of the last-named play was received with enthusiasm. At the second representation an old man in the audience cried out: —

"Courage, Molière! that is true comedy."

Time has not unsaid the verdict.

Molière was then thirty-two years old. It is said that in the effusion of the Prince de Conti's regard for his old schoolmate he wished to make him his secretary. Happily for the future of dramatic art, Molière had the courage to prefer his independence to that honorable post.

He continued for some time longer to travel over France; and it was not until he had played at Grenoble, Bordeaux, Lyon, and Rouen that he finally came to Paris, in 1658. He was then thirty-six years old. The Prince de Conti took him to MONSIEUR, only brother of Louis XIV. MONSIEUR presented him to the king and the queen-mother, from whom he and his company obtained permission to play Corneille's tragedy of "Nicodème" before their Majesties in the guard-room of the old Louvre. After the tragedy Molière asked permission to play his farce of "Le Docteur Amoureux," which was granted. The king was satisfied with the performance, and gave permission that the company should be known as the "TROUPE DE MONSIEUR," and play in the theatre of the little Palais Bourbon, alternately with certain Italian comedians who were already established there.

Two years later, in 1660, MONSIEUR, who declared himself the special protector of Molière, gave him the theatre of the Palais-Royal, in which he and his company continued to play until his death.[1] In 1665 the name of the company was changed to that of the TROUPE DU ROI. After Molière's death it was amalgamated with the Troupe du Marais and with that of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, and thenceforth took the name of the Théâtre-Français.

From 1658 to 1673, namely in the last fifteen years of his life, Molière produced his finest comedies. Those with which he preluded, as it were, to his great work "Tartuffe" were as follows: "Sganarelle," full of gayety; "Les Fâcheux," the first attempt ever made at episodical comedy; "L'École des Maris;" "L'École des Femmes," an imitation of the "Adelphics" of Terence, but with a far more ingenious ending; "Le Mariage Forcé," in which the subtleties of scholastic philosophy are admirably turned into ridicule; "La Princesse d'Élide," and "Les Amants Magnifiques," in both of which Molière laughs at himself for sacrificing too much to the taste of the period; and "Don Juan, or Le Festin de pierre," written with rare fire and originality.

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[1] In speaking of this theatre Voltaire says: "It was as ill-constructed as the play for which it was built, — the tragedy of "Mirame," in which Cardinal Richelieu had himself written over 500 verses. I may remark here that we have in Paris up to the present time not a single tolerable theatre. This is a Gothic barbarism for which the Italians very justly reproach us. The good plays are in France, the fine theatres in Italy." — TR.

"L'Amour Médecin" preceded "Le Misanthrope," — that vigorous character, admirably drawn, in which Thalia speaks a language so noble and so eloquent. "Le Misanthrope" was followed by "Le Médecin malgré lui," a charming jest upon the Faculty; "Melicerte," a graceful pastoral; "Le Sicilien," the first attempt at comic opera, proving the flexibility of Molière's talent; and "L'Amphitryon," a marvellous creation, though imitated from Plautus. It was also from Plautus that Molière took the subject of "L'Avare;" which he deepened immeasurably by making Harpagon in love; thus bringing the character of the miser into the strongest possible light.

Next followed in quick succession, with their own distinguished merits, "George Dandin," "Pourceaugnac," "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," and "Les Fourberies de Scapin." After these came "Les Femmes Savantes," in which pedantry personified is presented with infinite wit to the laughter of the world; "La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas," a lively picture of the absurdities of provincials in Paris; and "Psyche," written in collaboration with Corneille, and played in the hall of the Tuileries built by Louis XIV.

Finally, came Molière's last work, "Le Malade Imaginaire," in which, painting with terrible truth the actions of a woman, a grasping wife and a harsh stepmother, who is counting the last hours of a besotted old man, the great writer proved that death struck him while his genius was still in its vigor, and fully prepared to produce fresh masterpieces.

Such are the works which have placed Molière at so high an elevation that the ages will roll away and leave his fame untouched. He holds the sceptre among comic writers of all time and all countries. He is more natural and quite as gay as Aristophanes, as decent as Terence and more useful in the comedy of manners, and far more happy than Plautus in his comic situations.

As we all like to enter the inner being of these privileged geniuses to whom posterity pays homage, let us follow Molière for a moment into his private life, where we shall find him a simple, kindly man, ever ready to stretch a helping hand to misfortune, and to open the way to younger talent. We know that Racine, still very young, presented himself, tragedy in hand, to the author of "Le Misanthrope." The play was not suitable for the stage, but Molière perceived the tendency of the dawning genius and gave him the subject of "La Thébaïde," in which he himself, it is said, distributed the acts and divided the scenes. It is perhaps to this cordial reception, this honorable encouragement by Molière, that France owes Racine.

A known enemy to all cant and duplicity, Molière was felt by the world in which he lived to be a sound and trustworthy man. The uprightness of his heart, the frankness of his nature, made him friends among the most admirable and distinguished persons in France. His home was a rendezvous for every species of merit. Possessed of considerable fortune, he used it wisely and well. His house in the rue de Richelieu was handsomely appointed, and the most celebrated men of the period took pleasure in frequenting it.

With so many elements of happiness about him his face, open, eager, and joyous in early life, bore in his later years the imprint of deep melancholy; and while he shed about him on the stage an atmosphere of open-hearted gayety, he was inwardly a prey to sadness. What, then, is happiness, if success, honor, friends, protectors, the respect of the world and wealth cannot bestow it? Alas! Molière was a suspicious husband. He paid that debt to human weakness; he who pursued with such keen satire the pangs of conjugal jealousy was himself a victim to them. He married, when more than forty years old, a very young girl, the daughter of the same Madeleine Béjart with whom he had joined fortunes during his professional travels through France. This young girl, whose father was supposed to be the Baron de Modène, showed levity of conduct; and before long the disparity of age and the dangers to which a young and fascinating actress was exposed threw Molière into a painful and perpetual state of apprehension. Suspicion poisoned his life; domestic quarrels rent his heart; and he lacked the required philosophy to bear the consequences of his own folly in contracting such a marriage. It is related that as he walked one day up and down the garden of his country-place at Auteuil with his life-long friend, the poet Chapelle, who expressed astonishment that he still loved so heartless a woman, Molière said: —

"You speak of the perfect knowledge which you say I have of the hearts of men, and I admit that I have studied myself as much as possible in order to know their weaknesses. If philosophy tells me they could escape their misery if they would, experience proves to me only too plainly that it is impossible to do so. I judge daily by myself. I was born with the utmost disposition to tenderness; and as I thought my efforts might inspire her, after a while, with feelings that time could not destroy, I neglected nothing that might serve to this end. . . . But all my kindness has been fruitless; it has not changed her. I have therefore resolved to live with her as though she were not my wife, — like an honest man, who is convinced, no matter what the world may say, that his reputation does not depend upon the conduct of his wife. But if you knew what I suffer you would pity me. My passion has reached such a point that I even find myself entering with compassion into her feelings. When I consider how impossible it is for me to conquer what I feel for her, I say to myself that perhaps she has as much difficulty to overcome her passion for coquetry, and then I find it in my heart to pity rather than blame her. You will tell me, of course, that I am mad to love in this way; but, for myself, I think there is but one kind of love, and those who have not felt its delicacy have never truly loved. All things in this world are connected in my heart with her; my ideas are so occupied by her that when she is absent I cannot detach my thoughts from her. When I see her an emotion, a transport of emotion, such as may be felt but cannot be described, takes all power of reflection from me; I have no eyes for her faults; I see only that which is good and amiable in her. Is not this the last degree of folly? and do you not admire the fact that what I have of common-sense serves only to make me know my weakness, but not to conquer it?"

A strong constitution could alone bear up under these cruel trials, and we may gather that his was vigorous from the following description of his person, written by a contemporary, the wife of Poisson (one of the best comedians who ever appeared upon the stage), who was herself an actress.

"Molière was neither too stout nor too thin; he was tall rather than short; his bearing was noble, his leg handsome. He walked gravely, with a serious air. His nose was large, the mouth also, the lips full; his complexion was dark; the eyebrows black and strongly marked, and the various movements he gave to them often made his face extremely comical. As for his character, it was gentle, kind, and generous; his actors loved him; he was fond of speechifying; and when he read his plays to the comedians he wanted them to bring their children that he might conjecture the effect from their natural actions."

In February, 1673, his company began to give "Le Malade Imaginaire" in which he played the principal part. Without considering the state of his lungs, which had been affected for some time past, Molière insisted on satisfying the public who flocked to see the comedy. At the fourth representation, just as he had uttered the word "Juro" in the scene of the ceremony, he was seized with a species of convulsion. They carried him to his home in the rue de Richelieu. Conscious that he was dying, he sent twice to his parish-church for the sacraments; but the priests refused to go to him. A third priest was sent for, but before he came Molière had broken a blood-vessel and was dead. He died on the 17th of February, 1673, in the arms of two sisters of charity, to whom he was giving a home while they begged for the poor during Lent.[1] He was fifty-one years and one month old. He left a daughter, Esprit-Marie-Madeleine, who married Monsieur de Montalant and died without issue.

The archbishop of Paris, Monseigneur Harlay de Champvallon, noted in those days for his debaucheries, refused Christian burial to Molière's remains. An order from Louis XIV. [who, throughout Molière's life in Paris was his firm and comprehending friend] was required to obtain a corner of consecrated ground in which to lay the body of this great man. The archbishop, compelled to bow to the royal will, authorized his interment in the cemetery of Saint-Joseph,[2] on condition that the burial be after dark, and that no funeral services should be said there, or in any church whatever, over the remains. Two priests went to fetch the body; and two hundred of Molière's friends, bearing torches, accompanied the coffin. The populace crowded about the house and alarmed the widow, who flung money from the windows in order to pacify them. It was then that she said, in the bitterness of her heart, exalted for a moment by the sense of her great loss:

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[1] Molière had received the sacraments at the preceding Easter and was therefore in communion with the Church. See the widow's petition to the Archbishop of Paris. (Louandre.)

[2] A cemetery used to bury the bodies of suicides, and children dying without baptism. (Id.)

"What! do they refuse Christian burial to a man who, in Greece, would have had altars raised to him?"

This monstrous injustice induced the great Jesuit critic and grammarian, Père Bouhours, to write the following epitaph: —

Thou reformedst town and court,
And what is thy reward?
Frenchmen will some day blush
For their want of gratitude.
They needed a comedian
Whose genius should reform them;
But thou, Molière, to thy fame
Nought is lacking — only this,
That among thy teachings thou didst not
Reprove a nation for ingratitude.

The French Academy desired to count Molière among its members. In vain was he urged to give up his profession; all was useless; and the Academy was unable to adorn its register with that glorious name. Nevertheless, it took pleasure in rendering to his memory after his death, the honors he deserved when living. This fine inscription, "NOTHING IS LACKING TO HIS GLORY; HE IS LACKING TO OURS," was placed beneath the bust which preserves his memory within the precincts of the Society.

Molière had met the artist Mignard at Avignon on his return from Italy. With him he contracted the closest friendship. Their union was so warm and lasting that they seem to have divined each other's future fame, and to have foreseen that each should contribute to it. Meeting again in Paris, they renewed this sincere attachment. Mignard left to posterity a portrait of his friend, and Molière, in his poem on the dome of the "Val-de-Grâce," returned, as Ariosto did to Titian, the immortality he had received.

Two authentic portraits of Molière exist: this by Mignard, of his later life, which has been repeatedly reproduced, and is the type of all the portraits of him given to the world; and one by Coypel, painted in the glow of Molière's youth, when he was thirty. The latter renders, in a wonderful manner, the key-note of his countenance, his depth and fervor of contemplation, and the fire of his eye. Both portraits give the same characteristic features, the same expression, the same man, with the differences only of age and experience.

CRITICISM ON MOLIÈRE

By C. A. SAINTE-BEUVE[1]

There is in poesy, in literature, a class of men, exceptional among the highest, few in number, not perhaps more than five or six from the beginning, whose essential character is Universality, Humanity eternal, which enters intimately into their painting of the manners and customs and passions of an epoch. Facile geniuses, strong and fruitful, their principal trait lies in a mixture of fertility, solidity, and frankness. Here is knowledge and firmness of foundation, true indifference in the employment of means and conventional methods—all framework, all points of departure serving them equally well to develop their subject. Here, too, is active production, incessant amid all obstacles, and the plentitude of art, frequently attained without slow effort or artifice. In the Greek past, after the grand figure of Homer, who began so gloriously this small race and is the primordial genius of the noblest portion of humanity, we are embarrassed to know whom next to take. Sophocles, fruitful as he seems to have been, human as he showed himself in the harmonious expression of feelings and sorrows, Sophocles is so perfect in outline, so sacred in form and attitude, that he cannot be displaced in thought from his purely Greek pedestal. The famous comic authors are lost to us; we have but the name of Menander, who was, perhaps, the most perfect of the race of genius of which we speak; for the marvellous fancy, so Athenian, so enchanting, of Aristophanes lessens his universality. Among the Romans I see only Plautus, — Plautus, so ill-appreciated even now, — a profound and many-sided delineator, director of a troop of actors, actor and author himself, like Shakespeare and like Molière, whose legitimate ancestor he was. But Latin literature was too directly imported, too artificial from its start, being adapted from the Greek, to allow of untrammelled genius. The most fecund of its great writers, Cicero and Ovid, are *littérateurs* and versifiers in soul.

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[1] Portraits Littéraires, vol. ii., Garnier Frères, Paris, 1862; Nouveaux Lundis, pp. 257–280, Hachette et C^ie, Paris, 1872.

This literature has, however, the honor of having produced the two most admirable poets of the literatures of imitation, scholarship, and fine taste, two chastened and perfected types, — Virgil and Horace.

It is to modern times and to the renaissance that we must look for the other men of whom we are in search: Shakespeare, Cervantes, Rabelais, Molière, with two or three others of unequal rank; and that is all! These may be characterized by resemblances. They all had diverse and thwarted destinies; they suffered, they struggled, they loved. Soldiers, physicians, comedians, captives, they found it hard to live; poverty, passions, vexing cares, impeded enterprises were their lot. But their genius surmounted all barriers; not feeling or not resenting the narrowness of the struggle, they kept their necks from the yoke, and gave free play to their muscles. These grand individuals seem to me to belong to the very genius of poetic humanity, and to the ever living and perpetuated tradition of it, — its undeniable personification.

Molière is one of these illustrious witnesses. Notwithstanding the fact that he fully embraces only the comic side, the discordances of mankind, the vices, follies, and eccentricities of the race (the pathetic side being scarcely touched by him, and then only as a rapid accessory), he yields to none among the most complete; so much does he excel in his own field, which he traversed in every direction, from the freest fancy to the gravest contemplation; so truly does he reign a king in all the regions of humanity that he chose for his own, — regions which cover, in fact, one half of man's nature, and the half most known and most actively employed in the social sphere.

Molière is of the epoch in which he lived, through his picturing of certain peculiarities and customs; but he belongs far more to all time; he is the man of human nature. Nothing gives, at the start, a better measure of his genius than to see with what facility he attaches himself to, and then detaches himself from his epoch; how he adapts himself precisely to it, and how he rises above it and beyond it, grandly.

Molière seems to us in these days far more radically aggressive against the society of his day than he believed himself to be; we must remember this in judging of him. Among his illustrious contemporaries there is one, and only one (the last whom we might naturally be expected to compare with our poet), who, like him, and even more thoroughly than he, questioned the foundations of the society of their day, and looked without fear or favor in the face of birth, titles, and wealth. But Pascal — for it was Pascal! — used this ruin that he made of things about him only to shake with greater fury the pillars of the temple and cling convulsively to the Cross. These men, Pascal and Molière, appear to us in our day as the most formidable witnesses to the society of their time: Molière in a vast range of space, reaching almost to the sanctuary, raking that old society through and through, and casting pell-mell to the laughter of all, titled conceit and folly, conjugal inequality, insidious hypocrisy; pointing out, often at one stroke, the nature of just homage, true piety, and marriage; Pascal, in the bosom of orthodoxy, making the vaults ring with his cries of anguish, as he shook the sacred pillars with the strength of Samson.

But while making this comparison we must not attribute to Molière more premeditation of an upheaval of existing conditions than to Pascal; perhaps even less. Like Shakespeare and Cervantes and the three or four other greatest minds of the ages, Molière is the painter of human nature in itself, without regard for creed, dogma, formal constructions of any kind. In attacking the society of his time, he represented the life that is everywhere the life of the greatest number; and in chastising to the quick the manners and morals he found about him, he wrote for all time and for all mankind.

Amid the passions of his youth, and the too confiding and rash enthusiasms which he followed like other men, Molière had in the highest degree the gifts of observation and reproduction, and the faculty of finding and seizing the hidden springs of human nature; which he afterwards set going for the amusement of all. Boileau, his lifelong friend, called him, even in youth, "The Contemplator." Later in life, in the midst of his full, sad knowledge of the human heart and its divers motives, at the height of his mournful and philosophic contemplation, he still retained in his own heart the youthfulness of his lively impressions, the faculty of passions, of love and its jealousies, the secret and truly sacred inward fire. Sublime contradiction! which we love in the life of a great poet; indefinable conjunction! which has its counterpart in that which is most mysterious in the dramatic and comic genius, namely: the painting of bitter realities by means of gay and easy and jovial personages who have all the characteristics of nature; the profound dissection of the human heart embodied in active and original beings, who translate it to the eye by simply *being themselves.*

Among that race of minds which at diverse epochs and in diverse ranks counts among its members Cervantes, Rabelais, Le Sage, Fielding, Beaumarchais, Walter Scott, — Molière is, with Shakespeare, the most complete example of the dramatic, or to speak more correctly, the creative faculty. Shakespeare has, what Molière has not, pathetic touches and flashes of the terrible: Macbeth, King Lear, Ophelia; though in saying this we must not forget in Molière a quality which had but little opportunity to show itself, namely: the exquisite tenderness of his love-passages, — for instance, in "Don Juan." But Molière redeems this deficiency in other regions by the number, perfection and profound consistency of his principal characters.

In all these great men it is evident, and in

Molière most evident of all, that dramatic genius is not a mere development, not an expansion of the lyrical and personal faculty, which, starting from private inward emotions, transports the being of the poet and makes it live behind other masks (like Byron in his tragedies). Neither is it the pure and simple application of an analytical and critical faculty, which applies discriminatingly to the personages of a composition the scattered traits it has gathered. There exists a whole class of genuine dramatists who have something lyrical, something almost blind in their inspiration, — a fervor born of an actual living sentiment, which they impart directly to their personages; a familiar spirit whispers to them; they are subject to sudden, direct emotions in the crises of their dramatic fever. They do not govern their genius according to the plentitude and order of human liberty. Often sublime and superb, they obey I know not what instinctive cry, or noble throbbing of their blood, like some fine generous animals, — bulls or lions. So doing, they know not what they do. Molière, like Shakespeare, does know; like his great predecessor, he moves, it may be said, in a broader and freer sphere; governing himself, dominating his fire, ardent in his work, but lucid in his ardor. Molière and Shakespeare are of the primitive race, two brothers, —with this difference, I fancy, namely: that in ordinary life, Shakespeare, the poet of tears and terrors, would develop a more smiling and happy nature; Molière, the gay and joyous comedian, would fall into silence and melancholy.

Each of Molière's plays, were we to follow them in the order of their production, would furnish matter for an extensive and most interesting history, which cannot be given here. The year of "Le Misanthrope" (1666) is on the whole the most memorable and the most significant of Molière's life. Hardly was that great and serious masterpiece accomplished, when he was called upon to provide in hot haste for the joviality of the bourgeoisie by "Le Médecin malgré lui," and then to rush to Saint-Germain and write and play the comic pastoral "Mélicerte," for the amusement of the court. But Molière could well meet all demands.

He has been praised in so many ways as a painter of manners and customs and of human life that I wish to point out his merit on a side which has been too little brought to light, or, I might say, greatly misunderstood. Molière, to the very day of his death, was continually progressing in the *poesy* of comedy. That he was thus progressing in the moral conception of what is called high comedy (such as "Le Misanthrope," "Tartuffe," and "Les Femmes Savantes") is so evident that I do not need to insist upon it here. But side by side with this great development, by which reason grew firmer and more solid, observation more ripe and fruitful, let us admire the ever rising and bubbling comic impulse; wildly frolicsome, very rich, and wholly inexhaustible, which must be firmly distinguished (difficult as it may be to define the limits) from the rather *Scarronesque* buffoonery of Molière's earlier farce. How shall I express it? The genius of ironical and biting satire has its pure mirth, its lyric gayety, its sparkling laughter, effervescent, prolonged, almost causeless, evaporating from its cause like a sportive flame dancing brighter and brighter as the grosser combustion ceases, — a laughter of the gods, supreme, inextinguishable! "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," "Monsieur de Pourçeaugnac," "Le Malade Imaginaire," bear witness in the highest degree to this gushing, blithesome, spontaneous merriment. Monsieur Jourdain, Pourçeaugnac, Argan! — the Sganarelle strain continued, but more poetic, merrier, more delightful because more real. Molière, being compelled, for the court entertainments, to combine his comedies with ballets, let loose, in these dances made to order, a bewildering crowd of burlesque and impetuously vivacious choruses, composed of lawyers, tailors, cooks, Turks, apothecaries; genius makes to itself inspiration out of necessity. This issue once found, Molière's inventive imagination plunged gayly into it. The comedy-ballets of which we speak were not at all (and this should be carefully remembered) concessions to a coarse public, provocations for bourgeois laughter, — although that laughter found its incitement in them. No, they were in the first place, as we have said, imagined for the court fêtes; but Molière soon took pleasure in them, and frolicked lightheartedly in their scenes. The ballet and interludes in "Le Malade Imaginaire" were written of his own free will, the play not being commanded by the king.

All publishers and editors who, in a spirit of honorable emulation, recruit more and more readers and admirers to Molière should be encouraged; for, to my mind, it is a public benefit to make Molière beloved by the many.

To love Molière — and by that I mean to love him sincerely and with all one's heart — is, do you know it? to have a protection within one's self against many defects, many caprices, many vices of the mind. It is, in the first place, not to love that which is incompatible with Molière, that which was repugnant to him in his own time, that which would have been intolerable to him in ours.

To love Molière is to be cured forever, I will not say of base and infamous hypocrisy, but of fanaticism, of intolerance, of that hardness which anathematizes and curses; it is to possess a corrective to even an admiration for Bossuet and all those who, in his likeness, triumph — albeit in words only — over their dead or dying enemy; those who usurp I know not what sacred language and involuntarily fancy themselves, thunderbolt in hand, in the place and office of the Most High. Eloquent and sublime beings! you are too eloquent and too sublime for me.

To love Molière is to be equally aloof, nay, a thousand miles apart, from that other fanaticism, cold, barren, cruel, politic, which never laughs, but, rank with bigotry, under pretext of puritanism finds a way to amalgamate all species of gall, and to unite in a single bitter doctrine the hatred, rancor, and jacobinism of all time. It is also to be equally far from those colorless, flabby souls who, in presence of evil, know neither how to rebuke nor how to hate.

To love Molière is to be saved from falling into a blind, unlimited admiration for Humanity, which makes an idol of itself, forgetting the stuff of which it is made and the fact that it can never be, whatsoever it may do, aught else than frail and puny human nature.

To love and cherish Molière is to be antipathetic to all mannerism of language and expression; it is, not to enjoy or linger over mincing graces, studied wit, labored art, a flashing and artificial syle, — in short, affectation of any kind.

To love Molière is to be inclined to love neither false brilliancy of mind nor pedantic knowledge; it is to recognize our Trissotin and our Vadius at a glance beneath their rejuvenated air of gallantry; it is, not to allow one's self to be taken in, in our day any more than in Molière's day, by the perennial Philaminte, that *précieuse* of all time, whose form alone changes, and whose plumage is incessantly renewed; it is to love uprightness and health of mind, in others as well as in ourselves.

In saying this I give but the key and the air; the variations may be continued indefinitely.

MOLIÈRE was,[1] in the middle of the seventeenth century, the creator and promoter of realism; re-acting from the sublime and romantic drama, till then engaged with intrigue and incident outside of the common measure of humanity. Dramatic work was to him the painting of the manners and customs and nature of the men and women about him. He brought drama out of a taste for the abnormal to a love of the natural. He observed and painted men. "The business of comedy," he said, "is to represent in general the faults and foibles of mankind, and in particular those of our epoch." For this reason he is one of the greatest painters of humanity that humanity has produced. He sees, in the first instance, justly; then he enlarges, without caricaturing, in order to press the truth home to the mind of the spectator. But his passion for truth is such that he has not refrained from occasionally sacrificing to it the advantage and satisfaction of being understood easily and at once. Knowing that men are neither all good nor all bad, but a mixture of good and evil, he has not been willing (like other dramatic poets) to sacrifice, for the purpose of being clear, the presentation of good in evil and evil in good, in his characters. He has given generosity to Don Juan, tenderness to that vile character of Arnolphe ("L'École des Femmes"), and some absurdity to Alceste ("Le Misanthrope"), because, as he said himself, "it is not incompatible that a man should be ridiculous in some things and a worthy man in all others."

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[1] Émile Faguet, Dix-Septième Siècle. Lacène, Oudin, et C^ie, Paris, 1890.

"Le Misanthrope" would be more accurately described as a dramatic tableau than as a comedy. The plot is slight and may be said to have no finale. The interest of curiosity is not excited; Molière did not even think of exciting it. What he wished to do was to make a picture of one corner of the society of his day; and that he has done in the most delicate and high-bred piece of satire ever written; done by means of a witty, coquettish.

utterly false woman of the world; an honest, upright, noble-minded gentleman, so blunt, so violently truthful as to make himself ridiculous; with an attendant company of pretentious little marquises, a conceited poet, a malignant prude, a sensible man of the world, serviceable in his way and right-minded at heart, and a good and sincere young girl. Highest in the scale of Molière's art stands Alceste; Alceste, that is to say, all that there is most serious, most elevated in comedy; the point where the ridiculous borders on courage and virtue; one step more and the comic ceases and we have before us a character purely generous, almost heroic and tragical.

The comedy is a masterpiece, and French writers call its wit essentially French. They say that its delicate charm is not appreciated by foreigners, while in France it is a feast of pleasure to persons of taste. It remains to be seen whether in English words this charm will have so evaporated that English readers will not appreciate it.

THE MISANTHROPE

Comedy

IN FIVE ACTS

PERSONAGES

Alceste	*Lover of Célimène.*
Philinte	*Friend of Alceste.*
Oronte	*Lover of Célimène.*
Célimène	*A young widow.*
Éliante	*Cousin of Célimène.*
Arsinoé	*Friend of Célimène.*
Acaste	*Marquises.*
Clitandre	
Basque	*Footman to Célimène.*
Soldier	*Of the Marshals' Guard.*
Dubois	*Valet to Alceste.*

The scene is in Paris, at the house of Célimène.

THE MISANTHROPE

Act First

SCENE FIRST

Philinte, Alceste

Philinte.

What is the matter? What troubles you, Alceste?

Alceste, *seated.*

Leave me, I beg of you.

Philinte.

But still, tell me, what whim—

Alceste.

Leave me, I say; take yourself out of sight.

Philinte.

But at least you might listen to a man without being angry.

Alceste.

I choose to be angry, and I do not choose to listen.

Philinte.

I cannot understand you when your temper is hot; and though we are friends, I —

Alceste.

Friends! I your friend? Strike my name off your list. Till now I have professed to be your friend; but after what I have just seen of you, I tell you bluntly I am so no longer. I will hold no place in a corrupted heart.

Philinte.

Then, am I guilty in your eyes, Alceste?

Alceste.

You ought to die of shame; such conduct cannot be excused; all men of honor must feel humiliated by it. I see you overwhelming a stranger with attentions; testifying the utmost ardor for him; making protestations, offers of service, vows; and when I ask you afterward who he is, you can hardly tell me the man's name! Your ardor for him sinks the moment that you leave him, and you inform me he is nothing to you. Good God! it is a shameful thing, base, infamous, thus to degrade your soul by treachery; if I, through some misfortune, had done as much I would go hang myself in sheer remorse.

PHILINTE.

I cannot see, for my part, that mine's a hanging case; so I make bold to appeal against your sentence and beg you not to hang me, if it please you.

ALCESTE.

Jesting is most unseemly.

PHILINTE.

Seriously, then, what would you have me do?

ALCESTE.

I would have you be sincere, and, as a man of honor, say no word that is not from your heart.

PHILINTE.

But when a man comes up to you and salutes you joyfully, surely you must pay him in the self-same coin, make some response to his civilities, return him offer for offer and vow for vow.

ALCESTE.

No, — I cannot endure that abject custom which the majority of your worldly friends affect. I hate nothing so much as the bowing and scraping of those great makers of protestations, those affable givers of trumpery kisses, those obliging praters of empty words, who strive to outdo each other with civilities, and treat an honest man and a scoundrel with the same air and manner. What advantage is it to you if a man courts you, swears friendship, faith, zeal, honor, tenderness, makes you some fulsome compliment, and then turns round to the first rascal whom he meets, and does the same? No, no, a well-conditioned soul wants no esteem so prostituted; the finest hospitalities are valueless when we find ourselves rated with the crowd. Esteem is based on preference; to esteem the whole world alike is to feel no esteem for any one. And because you addict yourself to these vices of the time, *morbleu!* you are not of my kind. I refuse the vast complaisance of a heart that sees no shades of merit; I chose that mine shall be distinguished, and — to cut the matter short — the friend of the whole human race is not to my liking.

Philinte.

But so long as we live in social life, we must pay the outward civilities that custom demands.

Alceste.

No, I tell you, no; we ought to chastise, pitilessly, this shameful interchange of make-believe friendship. I want a man to be a man, and let the bottom of his heart be seen in all he says, and in all he does. Let it be himself who speaks, — not masking his real feelings behind false compliments.

Philinte.

There are many situations in which plain frankness would become ridiculous, and is not permissible; and sometimes — if it please your lofty honor — it may be well to hide what is in our hearts. Would it be fitting, would it be decent to tell all men what we think of them? And if there be any one whom we dislike or think unpleasant ought we to let him know it?

Alceste.

Yes.

Philinte.

What! would you tell old Émilie that 't is unbecoming at her age to play the pretty girl; or that the paint she wears shocks every one?

Alceste.

Undoubtedly.

Philinte.

Would you tell Dorilas that he is tiresome; that there is not an ear at court he does not weary with tales of his own bravery and the glory of his race?

Alceste.

I should.

Philinte.

You are joking.

Alceste.

I am not joking. In future I will spare none. My eyes are too offended. Court and society both show me nought but things that stir my bile. When I see men living together as they do a black spleen seizes me, a bitter grief. Everywhere I find base flattery, injustice, self-interest, treachery, deceit. I cannot bear it longer; I am enraged; and my intention is to tell the truth, henceforth, to all the human race.

Philinte.

Your philosophic wrath is somewhat savage; I laugh at that black spleen I see has gripped you. You and I are like the brothers in the

"School for Husbands," brought up as one, and yet —

ALCESTE.

Good God! give up those dull comparisons.

PHILINTE.

Give up yourself this churlish virulence. Your teachings cannot change the world. Since frankness charms you, I will tell you bluntly this disease of yours is laughed at everywhere you go. Such wrath against the ways of the world makes you ridiculous in the eyes of many.

ALCESTE.

So much the better; good heaven! so much the better; that is what I want; to me 't is the best of signs and a great satisfaction. Men have become so odious to me that I'd be grieved indeed to be well thought of by them.

PHILINTE.

Then you attribute nought but evil to human nature?

ALCESTE.

I do; I hate it with a dreadful hatred.

PHILINTE.

All poor mortals, then, without exception, are included in this deep aversion? Surely there may be, in our present age —

ALCESTE.

No, it is universal; I hate all men: some because they are wicked and evil-doers; others because they fawn upon the wicked, and dare not show that vigorous hatred which virtuous souls should feel to vice. From such compliance comes immunity for the bare-faced villain whom I now am suing. Behind his mask the knave is seen, wherever he is known, for what he is; the rolling of his eye, his bated voice, impose on none but those who do not live here. All others know that the sneaking fellow, fit only to be shunned, has by the foulest actions foisted himself upon society, where his career, by their connivance clothed in splendor, makes merit groan and virtue blush. No cries of "shame" can make his miserable honor hear them. Call him a knave, a scoundrel, a damned villain, all the world agrees, and no man contradicts you; *but* — he is welcomed everywhere; wherever he may worm himself he's greeted; men smile upon him; and if there's a canvass to be made, a place to be intrigued for, you will see him get the better of honest men. Great God! it is to me a mortal wound to see how vice is thus condoned and trafficked with. At times the impulse seizes me to flee to a desert and renounce my kind.

PHILINTE.

Good heavens! why take the customs of our time so hard; why be so little merciful to human nature? Examine it less sternly, and see its failures with some gentleness. In social life we need a pliant virtue; severe integrity is often blamable; sound reason shuns extremes, and teaches wisdom with sobriety. The rigid virtue of the olden time jars with our age and with our modern customs. We must yield somewhat to our time, and not reluctantly. It is a folly, second to no other, to meddle with the world and try to mend it. I see, as you do, fifty things a day which might be better, or take other courses. At every step I'm tempted to break forth, like you, but no one sees me do it. I take men gently just for what they are; I've trained my soul to tolerate what they do. At court and in society I think my phlegm, Alceste, is, to the full, as philosophic as your bile.

ALCESTE.

But that phlegm, Philinte, which reasons well, is it incapable of indignation? Suppose, perchance, a friend betrayed you, or frauds were planned to steal your property, or wicked rumors spread to injure you, — could you endure all that and not be angry?

PHILINTE.

Yes. I regard those evils, that your soul resents, as vices consequent to human nature; my soul is not more shocked by seeing men unjust, dishonest, selfish, than by the sight of vultures hungering after carnage, or thieving monkeys or infuriate wolves.

ALCESTE.

I 'll see myself betrayed, hacked into pieces, robbed, before I 'll — Good God! why talk? such reasoning is sheer sophistry.

PHILINTE.

Faith! I advise you to keep silence; don't rage against your kind so much, and give more care to the lawsuit which you have upon your hands.

ALCESTE.

I shall give none; that I 'm determined on.

PHILINTE.

Then who do you expect will plead your case?

ALCESTE.

Plead it? why, reason, my good right, and equity.

PHILINTE.

Do you mean you will not go to see a single judge?

ALCESTE.

Not one. My cause is neither doubtful nor unjust.

PHILINTE.

Agreed; but underhand intrigues are most disastrous, and —

ALCESTE.

No; I 'm resolved to take no steps. Either I am wrong, or I am right.

PHILINTE.

Don't trust to that.

ALCESTE.

I shall not stir a finger.

PHILINTE.

Your enemy is strong, and may, by making a cabal, bear off —

ALCESTE.

I care nought for that.

PHILINTE.

Then you are wrong.

ALCESTE.

So be it. I wish to see him win the case.

PHILINTE.

But —

ALCESTE.

I shall have pleasure if I lose my suit.

PHILINTE.

But surely —

ALCESTE.

I shall see in court if men will have the effrontery — will be wicked, scoundrelly, perverse enough — to do me injustice openly before the world.

PHILINTE.

Oh, what a man!

ALCESTE.

I would gladly lose my cause, did it cost me half my fortune, to prove that fact.

PHILINTE.

The world would laugh at you in bitter earnest if it could hear you talk in this way, Alceste.

ALCESTE.

So much the worse for him who laughs.

PHILINTE.

But this integrity you ask from every one, this honest and straightforward dealing in which you hug yourself, do you find it here in her you love? It does surprise me that having quarrelled with the human race so bitterly, you have been caught, in spite of much you might indeed think odious, by that which charms the eye. But what surprises me still more, is the strange choice to which your heart is pledged. Éliante, sincere and truthful, has a liking for you; Arsinoé, the prude, looks softly at you with a melting eye; and yet your soul rejects their love and makes itself a toy for Célimène, whose coquetry and treacherous wit symbol the morals of the present day. How comes it that, hating as you do our social foibles, you can endure the ways of that fair lady? Does all you hate cease to be evil in so sweet a form? or — do you choose excuse it?

ALCESTE.

No; the love I feel for that young widow in no way blinds me to her great defects. I am, in spite of the passion she inspires in me, the first to see them and the first to blame. But with it all, in spite, too, of my will, she has — I own my weakness — the art of pleasing me. In vain I see her faults; in vain I blame her; in spite of all, she makes me love her. Her grace, her charm, are stronger than all else. Doubtless, my love will purge her soul of worldly vices in the course of time.

PHILINTE.

If you do that you will have done great things. Then you think she loves you?

ALCESTE.

Yes, by heaven! I could not love her did she not love me.

PHILINTE.

But if her love for you is so apparent why do you fret yourself about your rivals?

ALCESTE.

Because a heart which deeply loves needs that the object of that love be all its own;

and I have come here now to tell her, as to that, all that my passion urges me to say.

PHILINTE.

For my part, if 't were granted me to form a wish, her cousin Éliante would have my longings. Éliante's heart, which cares for yours, is steadfast and sincere; had your choice fallen there it would have been in keeping with your needs.

ALCESTE.

True; my reason daily tells me so; but 't is not reason that rules love.

PHILINTE.

I greatly fear your passion and your hopes may —

◆

SCENE SECOND

ORONTE, PHILINTE, ALCESTE

ORONTE, *to Alceste.*

They told me below that Célimène and Éliante had gone out shopping; but as they also said that you were here, I have come up to tell you from an honest heart how great an admiration I 've conceived for you, and that I long have had an ardent wish to be among your friends. Yes, my heart revels in doing justice to great merit; and I eagerly desire some bond of friendship to unite us. A warm friend of my quality is not, I think, to be rejected. [*During Oronte's harangue Alceste is dreamy and seems not to notice he is being spoken to. He does not come out of his revery till Oronte says:*] It is to you, if you please, that my words are addressed.

ALCESTE.

To me, monsieur?

ORONTE.

To you. Do you find them displeasing?

ALCESTE.

Not at all. But my surprise is great, for I did not expect the honor I receive.

ORONTE.

You need feel no surprise at the esteem in which I hold you, since that of the whole universe is yours.

ALCESTE.

Monsieur —

ORONTE.

The State has no reward that is not far beneath the dazzling merit all men see in you.

ALCESTE.

Monsieur —

ORONTE.

Yes; for my part, I hold you preferable to all I see that is most eminent.

ALCESTE.

Monsieur —

ORONTE.

May the heavens crush me if my words are false. To prove my feelings, suffer me to embrace you with an open heart, — asking, as I do so, a place in your regard. Give me your hand, if it please you. You promise me, do you not, your friendship?

ALCESTE.

Monsieur —

ORONTE.

What! you refuse?

ALCESTE.

Monsieur, the honor you propose to me is great. But friendship asks more mystery; and it is, assuredly, a profanation of that name to seek to use it upon all occasions. Such union is born of knowledge and of choice; we should know each other better before we bind ourselves; for each might have such dispositions that both would soon repent of our rash bargain.

Oronte.

Ah! there indeed you speak with judgment, and my esteem for you is all the greater. Let us leave time to knot these gentle bonds. Meantime, I place myself at your disposal. If you have any overtures to make at court, command me; for it is known I have some favor with the king; he listens to me; and, upon my word, in every way he treats me most considerately. In short, I am yours, to use as you may wish; and, as your mind is known to be so brilliant, I have come — in order to begin the tie between us — to read to you a sonnet I have lately written, and ask you if 't were well to offer it to the public.

Alceste.

Monsieur, I am most unfit to settle such a question. I beg you to excuse me.

Oronte.

Excuse you! why?

ALCESTE.

I have the defect of being more sincere than persons wish.

ORONTE.

But that is what I want. I should have reason to complain if, trusting to your sincerity to speak without disguise, you should deceive me.

ALCESTE.

If that is how you take it, monsieur, I am willing.

ORONTE.

Sonnet — It is a sonnet, monsieur. *To Hope* — in fact, to a lady who has granted some hope to my passion. *To Hope* — The lines are not grand, pompous poesy, but simple verses, tender, sweet, and languishing.

ALCESTE.

We shall see, monsieur.

ORONTE.

To Hope — I know not whether the style will seem to you sufficiently clear and easy, and whether my choice of words will satisfy you.

ALCESTE.

We shall see, monsieur.

ORONTE.

I ought, perhaps, to tell you that I was only a quarter of an hour in writing them.

ALCESTE.

Go on, monsieur; the time has nothing to do with it.

ORONTE, *reading.*

'T is true that hope doth comfort bring,
And it rocks a time our sorrow;
But, Phillis, 't is a sadder thing
If he comes not on the morrow.

PHILINTE.

I am charmed already with the little poem.

ALCESTE, *low to Philinte.*

What! have you the face to call that fine?

ORONTE, *reading.*

Your complaisance methinks is lost;
You ought to keep your favors low,
And not yourself put to such cost,
If hope is all you deign bestow.

PHILINTE.

Ah! with what gallantry that phrase is turned.

ALCESTE, *low to Philinte.*

Good heavens! vile flatterer, you are praising nonsense.

ORONTE, *reading.*

If hope eternally delayed,
Quenches my ardor thus betrayed,
Death can alone my succor be.

Your smiles can nothing then repair,
Fair Phillis, it is all despair
When we must hope eternally.

PHILINTE.

The cadence of that last line is charming, amorous, admirable.

ALCESTE, *aside.*

Damn his cadence! The devil! 't is poisonous; I would the words might choke him.

PHILINTE.

I have never heard verses better turned.

ALCESTE, *aside.*

Good God!

ORONTE, *to Philinte.*

You flatter me; perhaps you think —

PHILINTE.

I never flatter.

ALCESTE, *aside.*

Ah, traitor! what are you doing now?

Oronte, *to Alceste.*

But you? Remember the terms of our treaty; speak to me, I entreat you, in all sincerity.

Alceste.

Monsieur, this matter is always delicate. We like to be flattered on our wit and wisdom. I said one day to a man whose name I will not mention, on hearing certain verses he had written, that it behoved a gallant man to restrain the lust of scribbling which seizes on us all, and put a curb upon his passion for notoriety through such amusements; and I also told him that by his eagerness to show his work to others he laid himself open to the jeers of malice.

Oronte.

Do you mean by that to tell me I am wrong in wishing —

Alceste.

I do not say so. I warned him that cold criticism crushed; that for this weakness men were much decried; that they might have a hundred noble qualities, but the world would judge them only by their foibles.

Oronte.

You think, then, that my sonnet is amiss?

Alceste.

I do not say so. I showed him, to stop his writing, how, in our day, this lust of scribbling has spoiled most worthy men.

Oronte.

Do I write badly, and resemble them?

Alceste.

I do not say so. Finally I said: "What pressing need have you to make these rhymes? What devil drives you into print? If the issue of a wretched book is ever pardonable it is when some poor luckless fellow has written it for bread. Believe me, resist your temptations; deprive the public of your labors. Don't sacrifice — no matter who may urge it — the name you bear at court as a most worthy man to take from grasping printers the repute of a ridiculous and miserable author." That is what I endeavored to make him understand.

Oronte.

This is all very well, and I think I understand you. But may I not know what there is in my sonnet —

ALCESTE.

Frankly, it is good for nothing but to put in the fire. You have modelled yourself on the worst examples. None of your expressions are natural. "Rocks a time" — what is that? "He comes not on the morrow" — who comes? "And not yourself put to such test" — what a phrase! And what may this mean: "Phillis, it is all despair when we must hope eternally"? This figurative style, of which our present writers are so proud, is out of keeping with sincerity and sound writing. 'T is a mere trick of words, pure affectation. That is not the way in which nature speaks. The shocking taste of the present century alarms me; coarse as our fathers were, their taste was better. As for me, I care far less for the finest things of the day than for this old song I 'll now repeat to you: —

"If the king had given to me
His great town, his *belle Paris*,
Would I but leave my sweet, my dear,
My dear I love so well;
I should say to the King Henri,
Take back, take back your *belle Paris*,
I love my love,
O gay!
I love my love too well."

The rhyme is not rich, and the style is old-fashioned; but do you not see how much better it is than all that affectation at which good sense groans? See how simple passion speaks: —

"If the king had given to me
His great town, his *belle Paris*,
Would I but leave my sweet, my dear,
My dear I love so well;
I should say to the King Henri,
Take back, take back your *belle Paris*,
I love my love,
O gay!
I love my love too well."

That's what the heart says when it really loves. [*To Philinte, who is laughing*] Yes, you may scoff; but in spite of your *beaux esprits*, I think more of that song than of all the flowery pomposity and false brilliancy which they cry up.

ORONTE.

For my part, I insist that my verses are good.

ALCESTE.

You have your reasons for thinking so, and you must allow me to have my reasons, which decline to submit to yours.

ORONTE.

'T is sufficient for me to know that others think well of them.

ALCESTE.

Others have the art of feigning; I have not.

ORONTE.

Did nature allot you a monopoly of brains?

ALCESTE.

Should I have more if I praised your verses?

ORONTE.

I can do very well without your approval.

ALCESTE.

You must, if you please, do without it.

ORONTE.

I would like to see you compose, in your style, a sonnet on that subject.

ALCESTE.

I might, by ill-luck, make sonnets as bad; but I should take good care that no one ever saw them.

ORONTE.

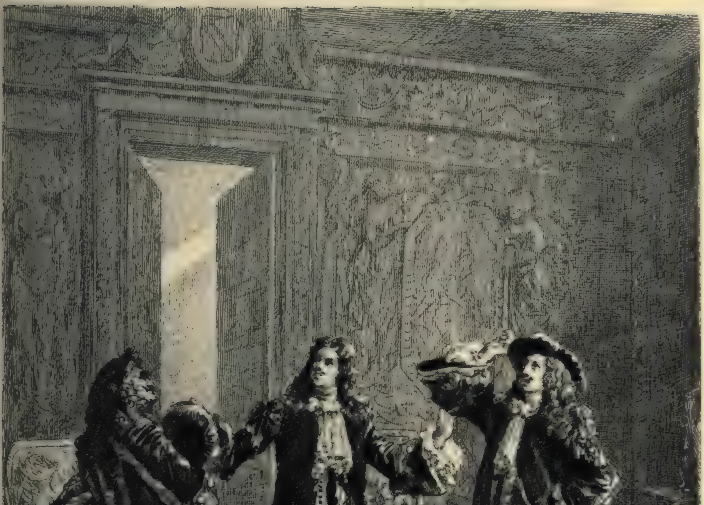
You speak very curtly; and all this assumption —

ALCESTE.

Go, seek elsewhere the incense that you want.

ORONTE.

Be pleased, my little monsieur, to lower your tone.



ALCESTE.

Faith! my grand monsieur, I speak as I choose.

PHILINTE, *placing himself between them.*

Messieurs, hey! messieurs; this is going too far. Let the matter drop, I beg of you.

ORONTE.

Yes, I am wrong, I own it, and I leave the house. I am your valet, monsieur, and with all my heart.

ALCESTE.

And I your humble servant.

◆

SCENE THIRD

PHILINTE, ALCESTE

PHILINTE.

There! now you see. For being too sincere you have a vexing quarrel on your hands. I saw at once that Oronte wanted flattery.

ALCESTE.

Don't talk of him.

PHILINTE.

But —

ALCESTE.

No more society for me.

PHILINTE.

Oh! this is too —

ALCESTE.

Leave me!

PHILINTE.

If I —

ALCESTE.

Not a word.

PHILINTE.

But —

ALCESTE.

I will hear nothing.

PHILINTE.

But —

ALCESTE.

Again!

PHILINTE.

This is an outrage —

ALCESTE.

Ha! damn it! 't is too much. Don't follow me.

PHILINTE.

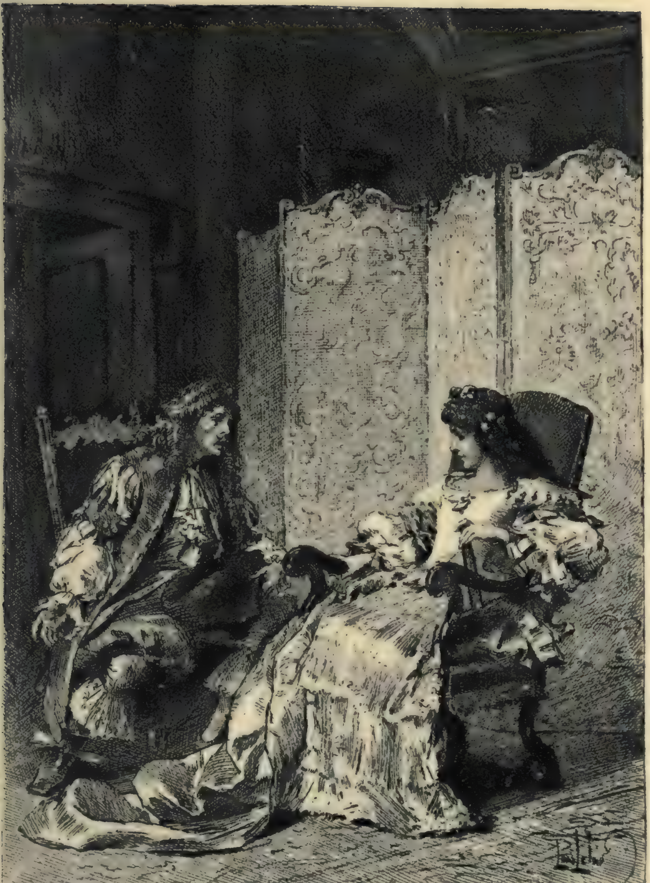
You are jesting; I will not leave you.

END OF ACT FIRST.

CÉLIMÈNE. *Then do you hold me guilty because men love me?*

LE MISANTHROPE, Act II., Sc. i.

VOL. I., *Page* 73



Act Second

SCENE FIRST

ALCESTE, CÉLIMÈNE

ALCESTE.

MADAME, will you allow me to speak frankly? I am not contented with your ways of action; they stir such bitterness within my breast I feel 't were better we should break apart. Yes, to speak otherwise would be deceiving you. Sooner or later, inevitably, the break must come. Were I to pledge you to the contrary a thousand times, I should be unable to keep my promise.

CÉLIMÈNE.

Is it to quarrel with me that you have wished to bring me home?

ALCESTE.

Quarrel, no. But your disposition is, madame, to give to each new-comer access to your soul; you allow too many lovers to beset you, and my heart cannot adapt itself to that.

CÉLIMÈNE.

Then, do you hold me guilty because men love me? How can I help it if they think me lovable? And when they take such pleasant pains to see me, am I to take a stick and drive them forth?

ALCESTE.

No, it is not a stick you need, madame, but a heart less facile and less tender to their wishes. I know your charms attend you wheresoe'er you go; but your welcome holds in bonds the admirers whom your eyes attract; its sweetness, offered to all who pay you homage, completes the work your charms began. The smiling hope you grant them fastens their assiduities upon you; but if you made your kindness less inclusive this mob of lovers would be put to flight. Tell me, at least, why Clitandre has the luck to please you? On what foundation of worth or splendid virtue do you base the regard with which you honor him? Is it the inordinate length of his little-finger nail that wins him the esteem you are seen to give him? Have you succumbed, with all the fashionable world, to the dazzling merit of that blond periwig? Are the fine ruffles at his knees the reasons that you like him? those knots of ribbon, have they charmed you? Is it the allurement of his mighty breeches which wins your soul to making him your slave? Or his manner of laughing, his falsetto voice, have they discovered the secret power of touching you?

CÉLIMÈNE.

How unjustly you take umbrage at Clitandre! You know the reason why I treat him kindly; he has promised to interest all his friends in this lawsuit I have upon my hands.

ALCESTE.

Lose your suit bravely, madame, and curry no favor with a rival I dislike.

CÉLIMÈNE.

But you are growing jealous of the universe!

ALCESTE.

Because you welcome the whole universe too well.

CÉLIMÈNE.

That very thing should soothe your nettled soul; my favors, as you see, are shed on all; if one alone received them you would have far more cause to take offence.

Alceste.

But I, whom you reproach for too much jealousy, what favors have I more then they, if I may ask?

Célimène.

The happiness of knowing you are loved.

Alceste.

How can my tortured heart believe it?

Célimène.

I think that having taken pains to tell you so, such an admission ought to satisfy you.

Alceste.

But what assurance have I that you are not, even now, saying the same to others?

Célimène.

Certainly, for a lover, your gallant speeches are too pretty; you treat me with such graceful courtesy! Well, to remove that anxious question from your mind, I here unsay all that I said; make yourself easy; nothing can now deceive you but yourself.

Alceste.

Good God! why must I love you? If I could snatch my heart out of your hands I would bless heaven for such rare luck! I do not deny that I have striven with all my strength to tear this terrible attachment from my soul; but every effort fails; it must be for my sins I love you so!

Célimène.

Your passion for me is indeed unequalled!

Alceste.

Yes, in that I can defy the world. My love is not to be conceived of; and no one, madame, has ever loved as I do.

Célimène.

Your method of doing so is truly novel; it seems you love a woman that you may quarrel with her; your ardor blazes forth in angry words; and sure no love was ever yet so scolding.

Alceste.

It rests with you to make that anger pass. For God's sake, madame, let us cut short these bickerings, speak heart to heart and put a stop —

SCENE SECOND

Célimène, Alceste, Basque

Célimène.

What is it?

Basque.

Acaste is here.

Célimène.

Well, show him up.

◆

SCENE THIRD

Célimène, Alceste

Alceste.

What! am I never to have you to myself? Why are you so ready to receive the world? Can you not endure for a single moment of your day to deny yourself to visitors?

Célimène.

Do you wish him to quarrel with me?

Alceste.

You show him a deference that I do not like.

Célimène.

He is a man who would never forgive me if he saw that I considered him intrusive.

ALCESTE.

Is that a reason for disturbing yourself?

CÉLIMÈNE.

Heavens, yes! good-will is of value among our fellows. He belongs to a set who, I scarcely know why, have acquired at court a right to be heard. They manage to obtain an entrance everywhere; and though, 't is true, they may not serve us, they are able to do us a vast deal of harm. Therefore, no matter what support one has elsewhere, we ought never to quarrel with such babbling persons.

ALCESTE.

In short, whatever happens and whoever comes, you find good reasons to see all the world; and these precautions about your lawsuit —

◆

SCENE FOURTH

ALCESTE, CÉLIMÈNE, BASQUE

BASQUE.

Clitandre is also here, madame.

ALCESTE.

Precisely! (*Moves as if to go.*)

Célimène.

Where are you going?

Alceste.

To leave you.

Célimène.

Stay.

Alceste.

Pray why?

Célimène.

Stay.

Alceste.

No, I cannot.

Célimène.

I wish it.

Alceste.

These conversations simply annoy me; it is asking too much to oblige me to hear them.

Célimène.

I wish it, I choose it.

Alceste.

No, it is impossible.

Célimène.

Very good, go; leave the house; you may do as you choose.

SCENE FIFTH

ÉLIANTE, PHILINTE, ACASTE, CLITANDRE, ALCESTE, CÉLIMÈNE, BASQUE

ÉLIANTE to CÉLIMÈNE.

The two marquises are coming up. Has anyone announced them?

CÉLIMÈNE.

Yes. (*To Basque*) Place chairs for all. (*To Alceste*) What! you did not go?

ALCESTE.

No; for I wish, madame, to make you speak your mind, either for them or else for me.

CÉLIMÈNE.

Hush, be silent.

ALCESTE.

To-day you shall explain yourself.

CÉLIMÈNE.

You have lost your senses.

ALCESTE.

Not at all. You shall declare yourself —

CÉLIMÈNE.

Ah!

ALCESTE.

Take one side or the other.

CÉLIMÈNE.

You are jesting, surely.

ALCESTE.

No; you must choose. I have had too much patience.

CLITANDRE.

Ah! madame, I am just from the Louvre, where Cléonte, at the levée, was supremely absurd. Has he no friend who would with charitable advice enlighten him as to his manners?

CÉLIMÈNE.

He is indeed a bungler in society; he makes himself conspicuous wherever he may be; and when one sees him after a slight interval he seems to be more ridiculous than ever.

ACASTE.

Talk of ridiculous people! i' faith, I 've just been undergoing one of the most tiresome,—Damon, the moralizer, who, if you 'll believe me, kept me one whole hour out of my chair, standing in the hot sun.

CÉLIMÈNE.

Yes, he 's a wonderful talker, who has the art of telling you nothing in a great harangue. There 's never any point to what he says; 't is only noise to which we listen.

ÉLIANTE, *to Philinte.*

This beginning is cheerful; the conversation is starting at good speed against our neighbors.

CLITANDRE.

But there 's Timante, madame; he is rather a good fellow.

CÉLIMÈNE.

Ah! he 's a man of mystery from head to foot; he flings you, as he passes, a haggard glance, because, without a thing to do, he is always busy. His speeches are too full of flourishes; he pesters one to death by dint of mannerism. He always has some secret to whisper in one's ear, breaking up a conversation, — and the secret is invariably nothing. Out of the merest trifle he makes a mystery; and even his good-byes, he whispers them.

ACASTE.

And Géralde, madame?

Célimène.

Oh! that wearisome chatterer! when will he cease to play the *grand seigneur?* He mingles only with the shining lights, and quotes his dukes, his princes and princesses. The quality infatuates him; and all his talk is now of horses, equipages, dogs. He calls the personages of highest rank by their first names; the plain word "monsieur" is forgotten by him.

Clitandre.

They say he is on the closest terms with Bélise.

Célimène.

That poor stupid woman! oh, what dry intercourse! I suffer martyrdom when she comes to see me; I perspire with the effort to find something to say; the obtuseness of her expression kills the words on my lips. In vain I assault her stupid silence with all the commonplaces I can call to my assistance, — fine weather, rain, heat, cold. But those are topics that are soon exhausted, and then her visit, always intolerable, drags its fearful length along. In vain I look to see what time it is; I yawn a score of times; she does not budge more than a log of wood.

Acaste.

What do you think of Adraste?

Célimène.

Ah! what excessive pride! He is a man puffed up with admiration of himself. His sense of his deserts is never satisfied at court, and so he rails against the court proceedings daily. There 's never an office, post, or privilege given but what he thinks he 's treated with injustice.

Clitandre.

But that young Cléon, at whose house all our best people now are visiting; what do you say of him?

Célimène.

Why, that he makes his cook his merit, and that the world visits his dinners and not him.

Éliante.

But he takes care that all the choicest things are served there.

Célimène.

Yes; but I wish he would not serve himself; his silly person is a horrid dish which spoils, to my taste, all the feasts he gives.

Philinte.

The world at any rate thinks highly of his uncle, Damis; what do you say of him, madame?

CÉLIMÈNE.

He is a friend of mine.

PHILINTE.

I think him an honest man, and he looks a wise one.

CÉLIMÈNE.

Yes, but he pretends to too much mind; it irritates me. He is always straining; in what he says you see him in travail to produce *bons mots*. Since he took it into his head to be so clever, nothing pleases his taste, he is too fastidious. He sees defects in everything that 's written; he thinks a wit should never praise; he counts it learned to find fault; fools only can admire and laugh. By approving nothing in the works of the day, he fancies he exalts himself above his fellows. Even in conversation he finds something to reprove; the topics are so low he will not condescend to them. He stands, arms folded, and, from the pinnacle of his mind, looks down in pity upon what we say.

ACASTE.

God bless me! that 's his veritable portrait.

CLITANDRE, *to Célimène.*

For painting people to the life, you are incomparable.

ALCESTE.

On, on, set on each other, my good friends at court! Spare none, let each man have his turn. And yet, if one of them appears in sight you haste to meet him, give him your hand, offer him flattering kisses, and swear by all the oaths to be his servant.

CLITANDRE.

Why find fault with us? If what was said displeases you, address your reproaches to madame.

ALCESTE.

No, by heaven! it is to you I make them; your compliant laughter incites her wit to these ill-natured speeches. Her satire feeds upon the wicked incense of your flattery; and if she did not see herself applauded her heart would be less prone to ridicule. 'T is thus that flatterers are guilty of the vices which corrupt society.

PHILINTE.

But why do you take such interest in the persons thus condemned, since you yourself would blame in them the selfsame faults.

CÉLIMÈNE.

Is it not monsieur's nature to contradict? Why expect him to agree with the general voice, or to refrain from exhibiting, wherever he may be, the cavilling spirit he received from heaven? The opinion of others is never agreeable to him. He sets up his own, believing he would be thought a common man if it were seen to agree with that of the world. The pleasure of contradicting has such charms for his soul that he sometimes, and not seldom, takes arms against himself, and wages war upon his own real feelings when he hears them uttered by the lips of others.

Alceste.

The laugh is on your side, madame, and there 's nothing to be said. You can wing your shafts of satire on me as you please.

Philinte.

But is it not true that your mind antagonizes whatever is said, and is unable, from a bitterness you avow yourself, to endure that others should either blame or praise?

Alceste.

Yes; for the reason that men are never right. My bitterness is just; I find them, wherever they may be, offensive flatterers or rash censors.

CÉLIMÈNE.

But —

ALCESTE.

No, madame, no; if I die for it, I must say that you find pleasure in things I cannot bear; and these friends here do wrong to foster in your soul this great indulgence of defects that injure it.

CLITANDRE.

For myself I shall say nothing; but as for madame, I must openly declare that I have hitherto believed her faultless.

ACASTE.

I see the graces and the attractions that heaven has granted her; but her defects have never, I must say, struck my eye.

ALCESTE.

They all strike mine; and far from overlooking them, I take pains, as she well knows, to bring them to her knowledge. The more we love our friends, the less we flatter them; it is by excusing nothing that pure love shows itself. For my part, I would banish those unworthy lovers who slavishly submit to all my sentiments, and by their weak compliance swing incense to my follies.

Célimène.

In short, if hearts should look at things in your way, they must, in order to love truly, renounce all sweetness, and find the crown of perfect love in heaping insults on the object of it.

Éliante.

Love, as a rule, is little ruled by laws. All lovers, as we know, boast of their choice. True passion does not see that which is blamable; the one beloved is always lovable. Defects love thinks perfections, and gives them pleasant names. The pallid one is comparable to the jasmine in her whiteness; the swarthy skin becomes a rich brunette; thinness gives freedom of motion and a slender waist; the portly dame is full of majesty; she who neglects her person and takes no pains to charm is called a careless beauty; the giantess becomes a goddess; the dwarf, an epitome of all heaven's marvels; the haughty spirit deserves a crown; the tricky mind has wit; the fool is kind; the chatterer, good-humored; the silent one maintains her virtuous modesty. 'T is thus a lover whose passion is supreme loves even the defects of her he worships.

ALCESTE.

And I maintain, yes I —

CÉLIMÈNE.

Come, let us end this talk, and take a turn or two about the gallery. What! are you going, gentlemen?

CLITANDRE AND ACASTE.

Oh, no, madame.

ALCESTE.

The fear of their departure weighs on your soul. Gentlemen, leave when you please; but I warn you, I shall not go till you are gone.

ACASTE.

Unless my presence importunes madame, I can stay here all day, for nothing calls me hence.

CLITANDRE.

As for me, provided I return for the king's *coucher*, I have no other matters to attend to.

CÉLIMÈNE, *to Alceste.*

You are joking, I am sure.

ALCESTE.

No, not in any sense. We shall see now if it is I of whom you are anxious to be rid.

SCENE SIXTH

Alceste, Célimène, Éliante, Acaste, Clitandre,
Philinte, Basque

Basque, *to Alceste.*

Monsieur, a man is below who wishes to see you, he says, on business which cannot be delayed.

Alceste.

Tell him I know of no such urgent business.

Basque.

He wears a jacket with great pleated basques, and gold upon it.

Célimène, *to Alceste.*

Go, see who it is; or else, have him shown up.

◆

SCENE SEVENTH

Alceste, Célimène, Éliante, Acaste, Clitandre,
Philinte, a Soldier of the Marshals' Guard

Alceste, *advancing to meet him.*

Come in, monsieur. What do you want with me?

Soldier.

Monsieur, I have two words to say to you.

ALCESTE.

You can speak out; I am prepared to hear you.

SOLDIER.

The Marshals, whom I serve, monsieur, bid you come to them at once.[1]

ALCESTE.

Me? bid me, monsieur?

SOLDIER.

Yes, you.

ALCESTE.

But why?

PHILINTE, *to Alceste.*

Because of that ridiculous affair between yourself and Oronte.

CÉLIMÈNE, *to Philinte.*

What affair?

PHILINTE.

Oronte and he had words about some verses he would not admire; and the Marshals wish to nip the matter in the bud.

ALCESTE.

I will not have the base compliance —

---

[1] The court of the Marshals of France took cognizance of quarrels and affairs of honor among gentlemen.

PHILINTE.

But you must obey the order; come, let us go.

ALCESTE.

What sort of terms do they desire to make between us? Will the Marshals order me to think the verses that caused our quarrel good? I shall not unsay what I have said, — I think them bad.

PHILINTE.

But a gentler tone —

ALCESTE.

I shall not yield one inch; the lines are execrable.

PHILINTE.

You ought to show a more compliant spirit. Come, let us go.

ALCESTE.

Yes, I will go; but nothing can compel me to take back my words.

PHILINTE.

Well, come and show yourself, at any rate.

ALCESTE.

Short of an order sent expressly to me by the king, to say those verses they are making such a fuss about are good, I will maintain forever that they are bad; and that any man who writes such stuff deserves to be hanged. (*To Clitandre and Acaste, who are laughing*) By heaven! gentleman, I did not know I was as witty as it seems I am.

CÉLIMÈNE.

Come, come, make haste and go where you are summoned.

ALCESTE.

I go, madame; but I shall soon return to settle, in this room, the matter we have been discussing.

END OF ACT SECOND.

Act Third

SCENE FIRST

CLITANDRE, ACASTE

CLITANDRE.

I OBSERVE, my dear marquis, that your soul is contented; all things make you cheerful, and nothing frets. Now, tell me in good faith, do you really believe, without self-deception, that you have any sound reason for being so happy?

ACASTE.

Parbleu! I don't see, when I look myself over, any ground whatever for discontent. I have property, I am young, I belong to a house which has certain good reasons to call itself noble; and I think, through the rank to which my blood entitles me, there are very few stations in life that I cannot fill. As to courage, of which, of course, we ought to think first, I know, without vanity, that I am not lacking there; I have been seen by the world to carry on an affair in a sufficiently vigorous and dashing manner. As for wit, there 's no question but what I have that, and with it enough good taste to judge without study, and to talk about everything. At the theatre, of which I am truly an idolater, I can wear a wise face, decide the fortunes of a play, and lead the applause at all the fine speeches which merit hurrahs. I 'm sufficiently active; I 've a good air and good looks, above all fine teeth, and my figure is slim. As to my style of dressing, I think, without vanity, that any one would be foolish to rival me there. My position in the world is as good as can be; the fair sex adore me; I stand well with the king; and, therefore, my dear marquis, I see, on all sides, every reason to be satisfied with myself.

CLITANDRE.

Yes. But finding everywhere so many easy conquests, why do you persist in offering useless homage here?

ACASTE.

Useless? *Parbleu!* I 'm not of a kind nor of a temper to stand cold treatment from any beauty. 'T is only common minds and ill-bred persons who burn persistently for frigid dames, or languish at their feet, endure their rigor, seek help from tears and sighs, and strive, by the painstaking of a long-drawn suit, to win the smiles their lack of merit forfeits. Men of my presence, marquis, are not made to love on credit and pay all the costs. However choice may be the lady's favors, I think, thank God, my value equals hers; and to do honor to a heart like mine is sure no reason it should cost her nothing. To put the thing on equitable grounds, she must at least meet my advance half-way.

Clitandre.

So you think, marquis, you stand well with Célimène?

Acaste.

Marquis, I have some ground to think so.

Clitandre.

Take my advice; get rid of that idea; it is an error. You flatter yourself, my friend, you blind yourself —

Acaste.

Quite true; I flatter and I blind myself.

Clitandre.

Why call your happiness so perfect, then?

ACASTE.

I flatter myself.

CLITANDRE.

On what do you found your hopes?

ACASTE.

I blind myself.

CLITANDRE.

Then you have proofs to give you certainty?

ACASTE.

I tell you, I deceive myself.

CLITANDRE.

Can it be that Célimène has made you secret promises?

ACASTE.

No, she rebuffs me.

CLITANDRE.

Tell me the truth, I beg.

ACASTE.

She does nothing but rebuff me.

CLITANDRE.

Oh! cease this jesting, and let me know what hopes you really have.

ACASTE.

I am the luckless, you the lucky one. She has so deep an aversion to me that one of these days I 'll surely hang myself.

CLITANDRE.

Ah ça! marquis, are you willing to settle our fates by agreeing that, if either of us can show some certain sign of having won her heart, the other shall make way for the fortunate lover and relieve him of a rival?

ACASTE.

Parbleu! I like that sort of talk, and will, with all my heart, agree to it. But hush, here she comes.

◆

SCENE SECOND

CÉLIMÈNE, ACASTE, CLITANDRE

CÉLIMÈNE.

What! still here?

CLITANDRE

Love stayed our feet.

CÉLIMÈNE.

I have just heard a carriage entering the courtyard. Do you know whose it is?

CLITANDRE.

No.

SCENE THIRD

Célimène, Acaste, Clitandre, BASQUE

Basque.

Arsinoé, madame, is coming up to see you.

Célimène.

What can that woman want with me?

Basque.

Éliante is below, and is talking with her.

Célimène.

Something is in her mind, or why should she come here?

Acaste.

She is thought to be a most consummate prude, and in the ardor of her zeal —

Célimène.

Yes, yes, pure cant! At heart she 's of the world; and all her efforts aim at hooking on to others, — in which, however, she has small success. She cannot see without an envious eye a woman followed by a train of suitors; and her sour virtue, overlooked by all, is ever grumbling that the age is blind. She tries to cover with a veil of prudery the frightful solitude in which she lives; and, to save the honor of her scanty charms, she attributes sin to powers that they have not. And yet a lover would be most pleasant to my lady. She even shows some tenderness for Alceste; the attentions that he pays to me offend her; she tries to make it seem that I have stolen them; and her jealous spite, which she can scarce conceal, is felt in underhanded ways on every side. I have never seen anything, I think, so foolish; and with it all she is impertinent to the last degree. Therefore —

◆

SCENE FOURTH

Arsinoé, Célimène, Clitandre, Acaste

Célimène.

Ah ! what fortunate fate brings me this visit? Madame, in all sincerity, I was beginning to feel most anxious for your welfare.

Arsinoé.

I have come, madame, to offer you some advice, which I feel I owe to you.

Célimène.

Ah ! how good of you, and how glad I am to see you!

Clitandre and Acaste go out laughing.

SCENE FIFTH

Arsinoé, Célimène

Arsinoé.

The departure of those gentlemen is timely.

Célimène.

Shall we sit down?

Arsinoé.

It is not necessary. Madame, friendship should, above all, be shown in things that most affect our fellows; and as there are none more vitally important than those of honor and decorum, I have come to prove the friendship my heart feels for you by offering counsel which concerns your honor. Yesterday I visited some friends, of sterling virtue. There the conversation turned on you; unfortunately, your conduct and its notoriety were not approved. The crowd of men you suffer to approach you, your coquetry, and the rumors it excites, received more censure and far harsher blame than I could wish. You will readily conceive the course I took. I said all that I could in your defence; excused you, firmly, as to your intentions, offering to vouch for your good soul.

But — as you know — there are things in life that cannot be excused, however much we wish to do so, and I found myself, at last, constrained to admit that your manner of living does certainly seem wrong, and has — to the world — an injurious appearance; also that mischievous tales are being told of it, and that your conduct might, if you were only willing, give far less ground for condemnation. Not that I think your virtue really injured — God forbid that I should think so! But the world believes in the mere shadow of sin; and it is not enough to satisfy our conscience only. Madame, I think your mind too reasonable to take amiss this useful counsel, or to attribute it to other motives than the hearty zeal which binds me to your interests.

CÉLIMÈNE.

Madame, I have many thanks to render you; such counsel can but gratify me; and, far from taking it amiss, I wish to recognize the favor you have done me by instantly returning it with other counsel which concerns your honor. As you have shown yourself so heartily my friend by telling me the rumors people spread about me, I wish to follow, in my turn, so kind an example by telling you what people say of you. The other day, at a house where I was visiting, I met some persons of high character, who, speaking of a soul's true kindness, turned their remarks, madame, on you. Unfortunately, your prudery and your bursts of pious zeal were not regarded by them as a good example. This affectation of a grave demeanor; your endless talks of virtue and of honor; your frowns and outcries at the shadow of indecency which one ambiguous word can cast on innocence; the high esteem you place upon yourself; the pitying glances you bestow on others; your frequent lectures, your sour censure of things that in themselves are pure and innocent,— all this, if I may speak to you quite frankly, madame, was blamed with one consent. What is the good, they said, of all this modesty, this virtuous exterior, if it belies the rest? 'T is true she says her prayers with rigid punctuality, but then she beats her servants and she does not pay them; in pious places she displays her zeal, but she paints her face in order to seem handsome; she covers up the nakedness of pictures, but has a liking for realities. As for me, madame, I took up firmly your defence with each and all; assuring them that what they said was slanderous. But their views clashed with mine; and their conclusion was that you would do well to meddle less with others' actions and look more closely to your own. They said we ought to look at home a good long time before we think of judging other people; that an exemplary life alone gives weight to our correction of the lives of others; moreover, that in any case, 't is better to remit that duty to those whom heaven has selected for it. Madame, I think you are too reasonable to take amiss this useful counsel, or to attribute it to other motives than the hearty zeal which binds me to your interests.

ARSINOÉ.

I know that in reproving we subject ourselves to much; but I did not expect this sharp retort, madame; and I see plainly, by its very bitterness, that my sincere advice has cut you to the heart.

CÉLIMÈNE.

Quite the contrary, madame; and if the world were wise these mutual counsels would be made the custom. Given in good faith, they would dispel the utter blindness each has for himself. It rests with you to carry on this faithful office with your past zeal. Let us take pains to tell ourselves, between ourselves, just what you hear of me, and I of you.

ARSINOÉ.

Ah, madame, I shall hear nought of you; it is of me the most reproving things are said.

CÉLIMÈNE.

Madame, I think that all things may be praised and blamed; and each award is just, according to age or fancy. There is a season for coquettish gallantry; there is another, still more suitable, for prudery. 'T is wise, from policy, to choose that style when time has deadened the glow of youth; it serves to cover a mortifying downfall. I don't deny that some day I may follow on your traces, for age brings everything. But it is still too early, madame, as everybody knows, to be a prude at twenty.

ARSINOÉ.

You plume yourself on very slight advantages, and ring your age with wonderful effect! But an advantage that you share with many is not so much to boast of, after all. I know not why your temper drives you, madame, thus to provoke me in so strange a way.

Célimène.

And I, madame, I really know not why you constantly declaim against me everywhere. Must I be punished for your disappointments? Is it my fault that no one courts you? What can I do if men will love me, and will persist in offering vows your heart may wish to take away from me? The field is open to you. I do not hinder any of your charms from winning lovers.

Arsinoé.

Alas! and do you really think the number of your lovers, of which you seem so vain, can trouble others; or that we do not find it easy to appraise the price at which you gain them? Do you think to persuade us — who see how things are going — that your good qualities alone attract your followers; or that they burn for you with honest love, and court you solely for your virtue? The world is not a dupe; it is not blinded by such vain pretences. Many a woman fitted to inspire the tenderest sentiments does not have lovers; from that the argument is plain: their hearts cannot be won without great effort, for none may woo us for our beauty only, but all must buy the right of courting us. Therefore you need not swell with pride for such poor sparkles of a trivial victory. Correct the self-conceit of your attractions, and cease to treat us superciliously. If our eyes envied the conquests yours obtain, methinks we all could do as you do, — cease to conduct ourselves with self-respect, and let you see that others can have suitors when they please.

CÉLIMÈNE.

Then have them, madame; let me see it done; with this rare secret make the effort to please, and —

ARSINOÉ.

Madame, let us end this conference; it irritates too much your soul and mine. I should already have taken leave of you, were I not forced to wait here for my carriage.

CÉLIMÈNE.

Pray stay as long as suits you, madame; nothing need hasten your departure. But, not to weary you with my presence, I 'll give you better company; and monsieur here, whom chance has brought so opportunely, shall fill my place and entertain you better.

SCENE SIXTH

Alceste, Célimène, Arsinoé

Célimène.

Alceste, I have a letter I must write; it cannot be delayed without some blame to me. Stay with madame; she will have the kindness, I am sure, to excuse my incivility.

◆

SCENE SEVENTH

Alceste, Arsinoé

Arsinoé.

You see she wishes me to entertain you until my carriage comes; and her civility could provide me with nothing more truly charming than this interview. Persons of lofty merit draw forth the esteem and love of every one; and yours, undoubtedly, has secret charms which lead my heart to enter all your interests. I wish the court, with more propitious eyes, would do full justice to your claims. You have much cause for indignation. I am angry almost daily to see that nothing has been done for you.

Alceste.

For me, madame? On what pretensions should I base a claim? What service to the State have I been known to render? What have I done, if you please, so brilliant in itself that I have cause to grumble because the court does nothing in return for it?

Arsinoé.

It is not every one on whom our court casts a propitious eye who has done good service to the State. Opportunity is needed as well as power. The great deserts that all men see in you ought —

Alceste.

For heaven's sake, madame, say nothing of my deserts. Why do you wish the court to trouble itself about them? Its cares would be too many and its hands too full if it unearthed the merits of everybody.

Arsinoé.

A dazzling merit will unearth itself; and yours is thought extreme on every side. I must tell you now that yesterday, in two distinguished houses, you were much praised by persons of great weight.

ALCESTE.

Hey! madame, 't is nowadays the fashion to laud every one. That is the way by which the present century levels everything. All are of equal merit; it is no longer an honor to be praised. Why! praises are stuffed down your throat, flung at your head; and there 's my valet's name in the gazette!

ARSINOÉ.

For my part, I have wished you to obtain some place at court in which to show your merit to the world. If only you consented, we would intrigue a little, and, to oblige you, start a few machines. I myself have men in hand whom I could use, and they would make the way quite smooth for you.

ALCESTE.

Madame, what would you have me do at court? The disposition that I feel within me requires rather that I keep away from it. Heaven did not make me, when it gave me breath, with a soul congenial to the courtly atmosphere. I am conscious that I do not possess the necessary virtues to succeed there and do my duty. Frankness and sincerity are my chief talents; and he who does not have the gift of hiding what he thinks, had better make a short stay in courtly regions. Outside the court, of course we cannot have the strong support or the titles of honor it gives nowadays. But, in losing those advantages, we are spared the vexatious trifling of silly persons; we need not suffer merciless rebuffs, nor be compelled to praise the verse of Monsieur Such-a-one, nor shower incense on Madame This-or-that, nor undergo the brains of seedling marquises.

Arsinoé.

Then we will drop, since you desire it, this matter of the court; but my heart is forced to pity you in your love; and, if I may disclose my thoughts upon it, I wish with all my soul 't were better placed. Indeed you have deserved a gentler fate, for she who charms you is unworthy of you.

Alceste.

In saying that, I beg you to remember, madame, this lady is your friend.

Arsinoé.

Yes. But my conscience is too wounded to bear a moment longer the wrong she does you. The state in which I see you grieves my soul too much; I am forced to warn you she betrays your love.

ALCESTE.

You show me thus, madame, a tender impulse; such warnings would oblige a lover.

ARSINOÉ.

Yes, though she be my friend, she is, and I dare say it, unworthy to enthrall a good man's heart; hers has for you a counterfeited tenderness.

ALCESTE.

It may be so, madame; we cannot see the hearts of others. But your charity might well have paused before you cast this painful thought in mine.

ARSINOÉ.

Oh! if you do not wish to be undeceived, there is no need to tell you anything; that, indeed, is easy.

ALCESTE.

No, it can not end so. This is a subject on which, no matter what is learned, doubts are more cruel than the worst of truths. For my part, I would rather nothing were told me unless it could be shown with certainty.

Arsinoé.

That is enough. Upon this subject you shall have full light. Yes, I will let you trust your own eyes only. Give me your hand to take me home. There I will show you positive proof of the unfaithful heart of her you love. And, if for other eyes your own could long, it may be you would find some there to comfort you.

END OF ACT THIRD.

Act Fourth

SCENE FIRST

ÉLIANTE, PHILINTE

PHILINTE.

NO, a soul so hard to manage was never seen; no reconciliation was ever yet so troublesome to bring about. In vain they tried in every way to move him; out of his fixed opinion he would not be dragged. Never did a more fantastic quarrel, I am sure, engage the wisdom of the Marshals. "No, gentlemen," he said, "I shall not retract. On every other matter I will agree with him, but not on this. Why is he affronted? Of what does he complain? Is his fame injured because he cannot write poems? What does my opinion, which he takes so ill, signify to him? A man can be a gentleman and make bad verses. Such matters do not touch his honor, and I hold him to be a gallant man in every other way; a man of quality, of courage, deserving of anything you please, but — a bad writer. I will praise, if you wish it, his way of living, of spending money, his skill on horseback, in fencing, dancing; but as for praising his verses, I beg to be excused! When a man has not the happiness to be able to write better than that, he ought to repress, under pain of death, his desire to make rhymes." Finally, all the grace and concession to which, with great effort, his feelings were brought, could only induce him say — thinking that he softened his style exceedingly: "Monsieur, I am sorry to be so critical, and I heartily wish, out of good-will to you, that I could have thought your sonnet better." After which an embrace was hastily brought about in order to conclude the proceedings as fast as possible.

ÉLIANTE.

He certainly is very singular in his manner of acting; but, I must confess, I esteem him highly. The sincerity on which his soul so prides itself has something noble and heroic in it. 'T is a virtue rare indeed in these days; and I wish I could see it in others as in him.

PHILINTE.

As for me, the more I see of him the more amazed I am at this passion to which he yields his heart. With the nature it has pleased God to give him, I cannot see how it is that he loves as he does; and still less do I see why your cousin should be the woman to whom his heart inclines.

ÉLIANTE.

It only shows that love is not invariably produced in hearts by harmony of disposition; and all those theories of gentle sympathy are in this case belied.

PHILINTE.

But do you think, from what you see, that he is loved?

ÉLIANTE.

That is a point it is not easy to make out. How can we judge how truly she may love him? Her heart is never really sure itself; sometimes she loves and does not know it; at other times she thinks she loves and there is nothing in it.

PHILINTE.

I think our friend will find more grief than he imagines with your cousin. To tell the truth, if he possessed my heart, he would have turned his homage elsewhere, and by a wiser choice have shown, madame, that he profits by the kindness you have shown him.

ÉLIANTE.

For myself, I stand on no punctilio, for I think that in such matters we should show good faith. I do not oppose his tenderness for Célimène; on the contrary, my heart is interested for her, and if the thing depended upon me I should myself unite him to the one he loves. But if in such a choice (as well may happen) his love should meet some unpropitious fate, and it so chanced another's suit were crowned, I could resolve to accept his homage then; for the refusal suffered by him in such a case would cause me no repugnance.

PHILINTE.

Neither do I oppose, madame, the kindness which your charming soul bestows upon him; and he himself can tell you, if he will, what I have taken pains to say to him about it. But if, by the marriage which he now desires, you should be unable to receive his vows, I shall then seek the transcendent favor which your soul with so much generosity now gives to him, — happy when his heart turns elsewhere, if yours, madame, falls back on mine.

Éliante.

You are making merry, Philinte.

Philinte.

No, madame; I am speaking now of my soul's best; and I await the occasion to offer myself openly; trusting, with all my heart, the moment soon may come.

◆

SCENE SECOND

Alceste, Éliante, Philinte

Alceste.

Ah! avenge me, madame, for an affront which has, at last, conquered my constancy.

Éliante.

What is it? what can have moved you thus?

Alceste.

That which I can't conceive of without dying. And the upheaval of all the natural world could not unhinge me more than this disaster. 'T is done, 't is over! My love — I cannot speak of it!

Éliante.

Try to control your mind.

Alceste.

Oh, just Heaven! why were such charms joined to the vices of the basest souls?

Éliante.

But still, what can have —

Alceste.

Ah! all is ruined; I am — I am betrayed, I am destroyed. Célimène — who could believe it? — Célimène deceives me; she is unfaithful.

Éliante.

Have you just grounds for that belief?

Philinte.

Perhaps it is mere suspicion, lightly kindled. Your jealous mind invents, at times, chimeras.

Alceste.

Ha! *morbleu!* monsieur, mind your own affairs. [*To Éliante*] I am, alas! too certain of her treachery; for here, in my pocket, written by her own hand, is a letter to Oronte which proves to my very eyes her shame and my disgrace — Oronte! whose homage I believed she fled; the one of all my rivals whom I feared the least.

PHILINTE.

A letter easily misleads at sight, and is often not so guilty as we think it.

ALCESTE.

Monsieur, once more, let me alone, I beg; and keep your interest for your own concerns.

ÉLIANTE.

You ought to moderate your anger. And this outrage —

ALCESTE.

Madame, it rests with you to avenge it. It is to you I have recourse to free my heart from poignant anguish. Avenge me on your cousin, your ungrateful and perfidious cousin, who basely has betrayed a faithful love. Avenge me for a wrong which you must hold in horror.

ÉLIANTE.

I avenge you! how?

ALCESTE.

Accept my heart — accept it, madame, and take the place of that unfaithful woman. In that way only can I have revenge; I wish to punish her by the honest vows, the deep affection, the respectful suit, the assiduous service, and the fervent duty my heart henceforth will offer on your altar.

ÉLIANTE.

I pity what you suffer, certainly, and I do not reject the heart you offer me; but the wrong is not, perhaps, so great as you imagine, and you may still give up these thoughts of vengeance. When we are hurt by one who has a deep attraction we are apt to make rash plans we do not execute. We may see powerful reasons to break our chain, and yet a guilty dear one soon is innocent; and then the revenge we wish to take is easily dispelled, and we see 't is but a lovers' quarrel after all.

ALCESTE.

No, no, madame, I assure you, no. The offence is mortal. I break my bonds, and there is no return. Nothing can change my firm intention, for I should punish myself were I to love her still. Here she is; my anger is redoubled by her presence. I will denounce her treacherous actions to her face, and so confound her. After which, freed once for all from her deceitful charm, I 'll bring to you a heart at liberty.

SCENE THIRD

CÉLIMÈNE, ALCESTE

ALCESTE, *aside.*

Oh, heaven! can I be master of my emotions?

CÉLIMÈNE, *aside.*

Heyday! (*To Alceste*) What troubles you thus? Why these sighs, these gloomy looks? Are they meant for me?

ALCESTE.

Of all the wrongs of which the soul is capable, nothing compares with your disloyalty. Fate, devils, and the anger of high Heaven have never yet produced a thing so evil.

CÉLIMÈNE.

Here 's sweetness truly, and I like it much.

ALCESTE.

Do not jest; this is no time to laugh; blush rather, for there is ample reason; I have sure proofs of your betrayal. This was the meaning of my troubled soul; 't was not in vain my love became alarmed; those frequent doubts you thought so odious were warnings of the calamity before me. In spite of all your care and cleverness in deception, my star was telling me of that I had to fear. But do not think that I will suffer the sting of such an outrage and not take vengeance. I know we have no power over desire; that love is, everywhere, born independent; no force can thrust it on the heart, and every soul is free to choose its conqueror. Therefore I should have had no reason to complain had your lips spoken truly, and refused my suit when first I pressed it. My heart would then have had no right to quarrel with its fate. But to find my love accepted with false vows — that is betrayal, that is perfidy, which cannot be too sternly punished, and I will give the reins to my resentment. Yes, yes, fear all after such infamy; I am no more myself, I am all anger! Stabbed by the mortal blow your hand has struck, my senses are no longer ruled by reason; I yield to the promptings of a just resentment, and I will not answer for what I now may do.

CÉLIMÈNE.

But what has caused, if I may ask, this violent fit of anger? Have you lost your reason?

ALCESTE.

Yes, yes, I have lost it! I lost it when from the sight of you I took, for my sorrow, the poison that is killing me, and when I trusted the sincerity of all those traitorous charms which so enthralled me.

CÉLIMÈNE.

What is this treachery of which you thus complain?

ALCESTE.

Ah! double-heart, that knows so well the art of feigning! But I have the means at hand all ready to confound it. Cast your eyes here, and recognize your writing. This discovered letter suffices to convict you; against this witness there is no reply.

CÉLIMÈNE.

Is this the matter that has so disturbed you?

ALCESTE.

You do not blush to see that letter?

CÉLIMÈNE.

And why, pray, should I blush to see it?

ALCESTE.

What! do you add audacity to treachery? Will you disavow that note because it does not bear your seal?

CÉLIMÈNE.

Why should I disavow a letter written by me?

ALCESTE.

Can you see it without shame for the crime toward me of which it proves you guilty?

CÉLIMÈNE.

You are, upon my word, a most unreasonable man.

ALCESTE.

What! do you dare defy that ocular proof, and say that in its tenderness to Oronte there is nothing to outrage me and make you blush?

CÉLIMÈNE.

Oronte! who says the letter was to him?

ALCESTE.

The persons who placed it in my hands this day. But I 'll agree it might be for another — if so, would my heart have less reason to complain of yours? would you be guiltless toward me?

CÉLIMÈNE.

But if it be a woman to whom I wrote that letter, why should it wound you? where 's the crime of that?

ALCESTE.

Ha! the shift is good, the evasion admirable! I did not expect, I must admit, this trick, but it convinces me completely. How dare you have recourse to vulgar subterfuge? Do you think me blind? Go on, and let me see the crooked ways, the shifty air by which you will maintain so clear a falsehood; I 'd like to know how you can twist to suit a woman the words of that letter which is full of passion. Explain, to hide your lack of truth, the words I now will read to you —

Célimène.

I do not choose it. I think you are ridiculous enough, to use your power as you do, and dare to tell me to my face all this.

Alceste.

No, no; be not so angry; take some pains to justify these words of yours —

Célimène.

No, I refuse to hear them; what it may please you to believe in this affair is of the smallest consequence to me.

Alceste.

I beg of you, tell me the truth; I will be satisfied — if I can be — that the letter is to a woman.

Célimène.

No, the letter is to Oronte; I wish it to be believed. I receive his attentions with great pleasure; I admire what he says, I value what he is. I am ready to agree to all you say. Now, do as you please, take your own course; but do not wear me out with such scenes any longer.

Alceste, *aside.*

Heavens! was ever any fate more cruel? Was ever heart so treated? What! when a just displeasure forces me to speak, 't is I who am complained of, I who make the quarrel! My grief and my suspicions are goaded on, and I am told I may believe the worst — in which she glories! And yet my heart is still so cowardly as not to break the chain that binds me to her, or arm itself with laudable contempt for the ungrateful object it has loved too well. (*To Célimène*) Ah! you know well, perfidious woman, how to make my weakness serve your ends in spite of myself, and how to use the fatal love, born of your eyes, to carry out your purposes. Defend yourself, at least, from a crime that overwhelms me; cease this affectation of being guilty. Prove to me, if you can, the innocence of that letter; my tenderness consents to come to your assistance — strive to seem faithful, and I, in turn, will strive to think you so.

Célimène.

Oh! you are mad with all your jealous transports; you don't deserve the love I feel for you. I should like much to know what could induce me to stoop so low as to deceive you; and why, if my heart leaned another way, I should not say so with sincerity. How is it that the kind assurance I gave you of my feelings was not enough to save me from your suspicions? Has such a pledge no power against them? and is it not insulting me to listen to their voice? Because a woman's heart makes a strong effort when it owns its love; because the honor of our sex — that enemy to ardor — firmly opposes such avowals, should the lover for whose sake we overcome those obstacles, should he be the one to doubt our truth? Is he not guilty in suffering others to say these things — at least without a combat? Go! such foul suspicions deserve my anger; you are not worth the esteem in which I held you. How foolish I have been! I am vexed with my simplicity in keeping any kindness in my heart for you. I ought to turn my love elsewhere, and give you thus a subject of legitimate complaint.

ALCESTE.

Ah! traitress, my weakness is indeed a mystery. Doubtless you are deceiving me with those soft words. What of it? I must follow my destiny; my soul is given over to your worship. I wish to see the end of this, and know what is your heart,—and whether it is black enough to still betray me.

CÉLIMÈNE.

No, for you do not love me as I must be loved.

ALCESTE.

Ah! my love is far beyond compare; and in its ardor to show itself for what it is to all the world, it even forms desires against you. Yes, I would fain that no one thought you lovable; I would you were reduced to misery; that Heaven denied you everything; that you had nor rank, nor birth, nor wealth, so that my love might make some startling sacrifice to heal the injustice destiny had done you, and that my heart might have the joy and glory of seeing you hold all things through my love.

CÉLIMÈNE.

That's a strange fashion of wishing well to me; heaven grant you may not have the chance of it. But here's your valet, seemingly excited.

◆

SCENE FOURTH

CÉLIMÈNE, ALCESTE, DUBOIS

ALCESTE.

What is all this? and why this frightened air?

DUBOIS.

Monsieur —

ALCESTE.

Well?

DUBOIS.

Strange things have happened —

ALCESTE.

What?

DUBOIS.

Matters are going wrong in our affairs —

ALCESTE.

How?

DUBOIS.

Am I to speak openly?

ALCESTE.

Yes, speak; and quickly too.

DUBOIS.

Will no one overhear us?

ALCESTE.

Ha! what nonsense! Speak out.

DUBOIS.

Monsieur, we must get away at once.

ALCESTE.

What?

DUBOIS.

We must slip off silently.

ALCESTE.

And why?

DUBOIS.

I tell you we must go at once.

ALCESTE.

The reason?

DUBOIS.

And go without good-byes.

ALCESTE.

But your reason, I say? Why do you use such language?

DUBOIS.

The reason is we must be packing.

ALCESTE.

Ha! I 'll break your head assuredly if you don't answer differently.

DUBOIS.

Monsieur, a man all black in face and clothes came to the house, and even to the kitchen; where he left a paper, scribbled in such a way that one had need be worse than any devil to read it. It concerns, no doubt, your lawsuit, but all the fiends in hell, I think, could never make it out.

ALCESTE.

Well, what of it? What has that paper to do, you fool, with the departure that you talked about?

DUBOIS.

Monsieur, an hour later a gentleman who visits you came hurrying to see you in much excitement. Not finding you, he charged me, civilly (knowing with what zeal I serve you), to tell you — Stay, I wish I could recall his name.

ALCESTE.

No matter for his name; what did he tell you?

DUBOIS.

Well, he was one of your friends, that must suffice. He told me you were in danger of arrest, and must get off at once.

ALCESTE.

But why? Did he not specify the reason?

DUBOIS.

No; he asked for pen and ink, and wrote a line by which you can, I think, get to the bottom of this mystery.

ALCESTE.

Give it me, then.

CÉLIMÈNE.

What can all this mean?

ALCESTE.

I do not know; but I will clear it up. Come, you impertinent devil, give me the note.

DUBOIS, *after searching long in his pocket.*

Faith! monsieur — I believe — I 've left it on your table.

ALCESTE.

I don't know what prevents me from —

CÉLIMÈNE.

Do not be angry; but go at once and see what all this means.

ALCESTE.

It seems that fate, whatever pains I take, has sworn to hinder all our interviews. But to defeat it, promise my love, madame, that you will let me speak with you again this evening.

END OF ACT FOURTH.

Act Fifth

SCENE FIRST

ALCESTE, PHILINTE

ALCESTE.

MY resolution is taken, I tell you.

PHILINTE.

But, however hard the blow, must it compel you —

ALCESTE.

Useless to say a word, useless to reason with me; nothing that you can do will turn me from my purpose. The age in which we live is too perverted; I desire to withdraw from intercourse with men. Honor, uprightness, decency, and the laws were openly arrayed against my adversary; on all sides was the equity of my cause proclaimed; and on the faith of my just rights I rested tranquilly. And now behold, I am defrauded of success; justice is with me, but I lose my case! A traitor, whose scandalous history is well known to all, comes off victorious by the blackest falsehood! Those who were on my side yield to his treachery! He cuts my throat and makes them think it right. The weight of his canting artifice — all jugglery! — has overthrown the Right and baffled Justice: he wins a verdict which has crowned a crime. And not content with the great wrong he has already done me, he is spreading everywhere a villanous book, the very reading of which is most condemnable, — a book that merits the rigor of the law; and the lying rascal has the effrontery to say I wrote it! And Oronte mutters low and tries maliciously to circulate the calumny, — he, who holds the rank of an honest man at court; to whom I have been sincere and frank; he, who came to me, with an eager ardor which I did not seek, and asked for my opinion on his verses. And because I treated him with honesty, refusing to be false to him or truth, he helps to crush me with an imaginary crime, and now becomes my greatest enemy! Never will his soul forgive me because, forsooth! I could not say his verse was good. And all men, damn them! have become like that. These are the actions to which glory leads them! Here's the good faith, the virtuous zeal, the justice, and the honor we expect of them! No, no, it is too much to bear such suffering. I will escape this nest of villains, and since with human beings we must live like wolves, traitors! you shall not have my life among you.

PHILINTE.

I think you are too hasty in forming that design; the harm is not so great as you would make it. The deed this man has dared impute to you has not obtained enough belief to make the authorities arrest you. That false report is dying of itself; it is an action that will injure only him who did it.

ALCESTE.

Injure him, indeed! He does not fear the scandal of such tricks. He has the world's permission to be a scoundrel; and so far from his credit being injured by this deed you 'll see him in some honored place to-morrow.

PHILINTE.

Nevertheless 't is certain no one has given much belief to the tale his malice spreads about you. On that score you have nothing at all to fear. As for the verdict on your lawsuit, of which indeed you may complain, justice may yet be won; you can appeal against this judgment —

ALCESTE.

No, I shall hold to it. However great the wrong that verdict does me, I will not have it quashed; it shows too plainly how the Right is wronged. I wish it to remain for all posterity, — a signal mark, a noted testimony to the wickedness of this age. 'T will cost me twenty thousand francs, but with that sum I buy the right to curse the iniquity of human nature and to keep alive my everlasting hatred to it.

PHILINTE.

In short —

ALCESTE.

In short, your efforts are superfluous. What can you find to say upon this matter, monsieur? Will you have the effrontery to bid me to my face excuse the infamy of what has happened?

PHILINTE.

No, I am one with you in what you say. In these days all things go by base intrigue and selfish interests; craft carries all before it. Men ought indeed to be made of other metal; but is their lack of probity a reason to withdraw yourself from social life? All human frailty is a means of exercising our philosophy. That is the finest work of virtue. If every one were clothed with integrity, if every heart were just, frank, kindly, the other virtues would be well-nigh useless, since their chief purpose is to make us bear with patience the injustice of our fellows. And so, a heart of honest virtue —

Alceste.

I know your words are of the best, monsieur, your excellent arguments are most abundant; but you waste your time in making those fine speeches. Reason demands for my soul's good that I retire. I have not enough control over my tongue; I cannot answer for what I might be led to say; I should have twenty duels on my hands at once. Leave me, without further argument, to wait for Célimène. She must consent to my design. 'T is that which brings me here to speak with her. I am about to see whether her heart does truly love me; this coming hour will prove it to me once for all.

Philinte.

Let us go up to Éliante while awaiting Célimène.

ALCESTE.

No, my soul is full of care; do you go up, and leave me in this gloomy corner with my black misery.

PHILINTE.

'T is cruel company. I will find Éliante and bring her down.

◆

SCENE SECOND

CÉLIMÈNE, ORONTE, ALCESTE

ORONTE.

Yes, it is for you to say, madame, whether you will bind me wholly to you by these tender ties. I must have full assurance from your soul to mine; a lover cannot bear these hesitations. If the ardor of my passion has power to move you, you should not feign unwillingness to let me know it. The proof I ask of you is, plainly, no longer to admit Alceste among your suitors; to sacrifice him, madame, to my love; and banish him from your house this very day.

CÉLIMÈNE.

But why are you so angry with him now, you whom I have often known to speak of him with favor?

ORONTE.

Madame, there is no need of explanations. The question is, What are your sentiments? Choose, if you please, between us; keep one or else the other; my resolution waits upon your will.

ALCESTE, *advancing from his corner.*

Yes, monsieur is right. Madame, you must choose. In this his wishes accord with mine; the self-same passion prompts me, the same intention brings me hither. My love must have some certain proof of yours. Things cannot thus drag on another day; this is the moment to reveal your heart.

ORONTE.

Monsieur, if your suit succeeds, I do not mean that my importunate love shall trouble it.

ALCESTE.

Monsieur, I shall not seek, jealous or not, to share her heart with you.

ORONTE.

If she prefers your love to mine —

ALCESTE.

If she is capable of any leaning toward you —

Oronte.

I swear I will no longer court her.

Alceste.

I swear I will no longer see her.

Oronte.

Madame, it is for you to speak without constraint.

Alceste.

Madame, you can explain yourself without anxiety.

Oronte.

You have but to say on whom your wishes fall.

Alceste.

You have but to speak the truth and choose between us.

Oronte.

What! at making such a choice you seem to be distressed!

Alceste.

What! your soul hesitates and seems uncertain!

Célimène.

Good heavens! this demand is most ill-timed; how little sense or reason either of you show! I know myself the preference that I feel; my heart is not upon the scales, suspended doubtfully between you. Nothing could be more quickly made than the choice you ask for: but I should feel, to tell the truth, too much embarrassment in making this avowal to your face. A choice like this must seem unkind to one; it should not, therefore, openly be made in presence of both. A heart will always show its leanings plainly enough without compelling it to bare itself; some gentler means can sure be found to show a lover that his attentions are unwelcome.

ORONTE.

No, no, I do not fear a frank avowal, and I consent for my part —

ALCESTE.

And I demand it. It is this very publishing I dare exact. I will not have you shirk the truth in any way. To keep on terms with all the world is what you study. But no more dallying, no more indecision now; you must explain yourself decisively; or else I take refusal for decision, and I shall know, for my part, how to explain your silence; I shall consider said the wrong that I expect of you.

ORONTE.

Monsieur, I thank you for your indignation, and I say to madame, here, the same as you.

CÉLIMÈNE.

How you annoy me with your whims! What justice is there in what you ask? Have I not told you the motive that restrains me? Here is Éliante, she shall judge this matter.

◆

SCENE THIRD

ÉLIANTE, PHILINTE, CÉLIMÈNE, ORONTE, ALCESTE

CÉLIMÈNE.

Cousin, I am persecuted by these two men, whose scheme appears to have been concerted. They each demand, with equal heat, that I shall here proclaim, in presence of both, the choice my heart has made; and that, in giving this decision openly, I shall forbid one or the other from paying me attentions. Tell me if things are ever done in that way.

ÉLIANTE.

Do not consult me; you may find that you appeal to the wrong person. Frankly, I am for those who speak their thoughts.

ORONTE.

Madame, it is in vain you seek to evade us.

ALCESTE.

All your evasions are ill-seconded.

ORONTE.

You must, you shall speak out, and end this vacillation.

ALCESTE.

It is enough if you persist in silence.

ORONTE.

I ask but a single word to end the matter.

ALCESTE.

And I shall comprehend you if you say no word.

◆

SCENE FOURTH

ARSINOÉ, ACASTE, CLITANDRE, CÉLIMÈNE, ORONTE, ALCESTE, ÉLIANTE, PHILINTE

ACASTE, *to Célimène.*

Madame, we have come, Clitandre and I, to clear up, if you please without offence, a trifling matter.

CLITANDRE, *to Oronte and Alceste.*

Your presence, gentlemen, is very timely, for you are both concerned in this affair.

ARSINOÉ, *to Célimène.*

It may surprise you, madame, to see me here, and I must tell you that these gentlemen have caused my coming. They came to see me to complain of something my heart cannot believe. I have too high an esteem for your real depth of soul to think you capable of so great a wrong. My eyes refused their strongest testimony; and my friendship, overlooking our small jars, has brought me to you in their company that I may see you clear yourself at once of this foul calumny.

ACASTE.

Madame, we wish to see, in a kindly spirit, how you will take these facts. Here is a letter written by you to Clitandre.

CLITANDRE.

And here a tender billet written by you to Acaste.

ACASTE, *to Oronte and Alceste.*

Gentlemen, this writing is well-known to you, of course. I do not doubt that her civilities have frequently enabled you to see it. But the letter itself is worthy of being read.

(*Reads.*) "What a strange man you are to blame me for my gayety, and to declare that I am never so pleased as when you are not with me.

Nothing was ever more unjust; and if you do not come at once and beg my pardon for this offence, I will never in my life forgive you for it. Our tall, ungainly viscount — "

He ought to be present, and hear this.

"Our tall, ungainly viscount, the first whom you complain of, is a man who never pleased me; and since I saw him, for an hour together, spit in a pond in order to make bubbles, I have had a poor opinion of him. As for the little marquis — "

That is myself, gentlemen; I say it without vanity.

"As for the little marquis, who held my hand to-day for a long time, I think him the most finical of little beings; there 's nothing of him but his nobility. And as for the man of the green ribbons — "

(*To Alceste*) Your turn now, monsieur.

"As for the man of the green ribbons, he amuses me at times with his bluntness and his surly grumbling; but there are moments when I think him the most irritating mortal upon earth. As for the man of sonnets — "

(*To Oronte*) This is to your address, monsieur.

"As for the man of sonnets, who has flung himself into poesy and wishes to be an author in defiance of everybody, I do not give myself the trouble to listen to him. His prose fatigues me even more than his verses. Therefore, do pray believe that I am not so gay and amused in your absence as you fancy, and that I think of you — more than I could wish — at the parties of pleasure to which I am dragged; it is a wonderful seasoning of all enjoyments to think of those we love."

CLITANDRE.

And here am I, in this billet to Acaste.

"Your Clitandre, of whom you speak, and who says sweet things to me, is the very last man for whom I could feel regard. He is absurd to imagine he is loved; and you are still more absurd to fancy you are not loved. Exchange opinions; and then you will, both of you, be more nearly right. Come and see me as often as you can, and help me to bear the annoyance of being beset by him.

There, madame, is the model of a noble character; you know what it is called. Enough! We shall each exhibit, wherever we go, this glorious picture of your heart.

ACASTE.

I might say much to you, for the subject is a fine one; but I do not count you worthy of my anger. I will let you see that little marquises can win, for consolation, hearts that are worth far more than yours.

[*Exeunt marquises.*]

SCENE FIFTH

CÉLIMÈNE, ÉLIANTE, ARSINOÉ, ALCESTE, ORONTE, PHILINTE

ORONTE.

Can it be that you tear me thus to pieces after all that you have written and said to me? Does your heart, adorned with such fine semblances of love, give itself, in turn, to all the human race? Go! — I have been a dupe, but I am one no longer. You have done me, madame, a service in letting me unmask you. I shall profit in the heart I thus regain, and find my vengeance in your loss. (*To Alceste*) Monsieur, I offer no further hindrance to your love; you can conclude your treaty with madame. [*Exit.*]

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SCENE SIXTH

CÉLIMÈNE, ÉLIANTE, ARSINOÉ, ALCESTE, PHILINTE

ARSINOÉ.

Truly this is the basest act I have ever known. I cannot keep silence, for I feel so shocked. Was ever any conduct seen like yours? I take no interest in those other men, but as for monsieur (*motioning to Alceste*) who rested all his happiness on you, a man like him, of honor and great merit, who cherished you with absolute idolatry, ought he —

ALCESTE.

Allow me, madame, if you please, to manage my affairs myself. Pray do not take upon yourself superfluous cares. In vain my heart hears you take up its quarrel; it is not in a state to pay for so great zeal. If by another choice I wished to avenge myself it would not be on you that choice would fall.

ARSINOÉ.

Eh! do you imagine, monsieur, that such a thought exists, or any eagerness is felt to win you? I think your mind is far too full of vanity if it can flatter itself with that belief. Madame's rejected leavings are a merchandise one would be foolish indeed to take a fancy to. Pray undeceive yourself; carry your thoughts less high; I'm not the sort of woman you should aspire to. You would do well to keep your sighs for her; I long to see so suitable a match. [*Exit.*]

SCENE SEVENTH

CÉLIMÈNE, ELIANTE, ALCESTE, PHILINTE

ALCESTE, *to Célimène.*

Madame, I have kept silence, in spite of all that I have seen and heard. I have allowed all others to speak before me. Have I controlled myself enough, and may I now —

CÉLIMÈNE.

Yes, say all; you have a right to complain, and to reproach me as you will. I have done wrong, — I here confess it; and my discomfited soul will seek no vain excuse to answer you. I have despised the anger of the others, but I admit my crime to you. Your indignation, without a doubt, is reasonable. I know how guilty I must seem to you, — how all things go to prove I have betrayed you. In short, you have every right to hate me. Do so; I consent.

ALCESTE.

Ah! can I, traitress? Can I thus conquer love? However I may long to hate you, have I a heart within me to obey my will? (*To Éliante and Philinte*) See what this abject tenderness can do! I call you both to witness my great weakness. And yet, this is not all; you are about to see me carry that weakness farther, show what a folly 'tis to call us wise, and prove that in all hearts there's still the man. (*To Célimène*) Yes, I am willing to forget your guilt; my heart is ready to excuse it and call this wrong a foible to which the vices of the times misled your youth, —*provided* you here consent to clasp hands with the purpose I have formed to separate from men and live apart in country solitudes; to which, without delay you now must follow me. In that way only can you still repair, before the eyes of all men, the wrong that you have done me. Do this, and notwithstanding the notoriety which noble hearts abhor, I still shall find it in my heart to love you.

CÉLIMÈNE.

I! renounce the world before I'm old, and bury myself with you in country solitudes?

ALCESTE.

But if your love responds to mine what matters all the world to you? Will you not be content with me alone?

CÉLIMÈNE.

Solitude has terrors for a heart so young. I feel that mine has not the grandeur, nor the strength, to resolve upon a scheme of this kind. If the bestowal of my hand can satisfy your wishes I will consent to tie the knot of marriage —

ALCESTE.

No; my soul revolts against you now; this hard refusal moves me more than all the rest. And since you cannot in so sweet a tie find all in me as I found all in you, go! — I reject you. This sore outrage frees me forever from your unworthy bonds. [*Exit Célimène.*]

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SCENE EIGHTH

ÉLIANTE, ALCESTE, PHILINTE

ALCESTE, *to Éliante.*

Madame, your beauty is adorned with every virtue; never have I seen aught in you but strict sincerity. I have long valued you most highly. Let me continue to esteem you thus; and suffer that my heart, in all its divers troubles, should not demand the honor of your bonds. I feel myself unworthy; I begin to know that heaven did not give me life for the ties of marriage. 'T would be too base a homage to offer you the leavings of a heart not worth your own; therefore —

ÉLIANTE.

You can fulfil that thought, Alceste. My hand is not so difficult to bestow, for here 's your friend, who, if I asked him, would willingly accept it.

PHILINTE.

Ah! that honor, madame, is my sole desire. To gain it, I would sacrifice both blood and life.

ALCESTE.

And may you ever taste of true contentment, by keeping, each for each, such sentiments. As for me, betrayed on all sides, crushed by injustice, I leave a pit where vices triumph, to seek somewhere on earth a lonely spot where I am free to be a man of honor.

PHILINTE.

Come, madame, come, let us employ all ways to thwart this scheme his heart proposes.

END OF THE MISANTHROPE.

LE
BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME

(THE NOBODY WHO APES NOBILITY)

Comedy-Ballet
IN FIVE ACTS

PERSONAGES

Monsieur Jourdain	*Bourgeois.*
Madame Jourdain	*His wife.*
Lucile	*Daughter of M. Jourdain.*
Cléonte	*Lover of Lucile.*
Dorimène	*Marchioness.*
Dorante	*Count, lover of Dorimène.*
Nicole	*Servant-woman to Jourdain.*
Covielle	*Valet to Cléonte.*

A Music-master.

A Pupil of the Music-master.

A Dancing-master.

A Fencing-master.

A Professor of Philosophy.

A Master-tailor.

A Journeyman-tailor.

Two Lacqueys.

Musicians, Cooks, Tailors, Turks, Dervishes, etc.

The scene is in Paris, in the house of Monsieur Jourdain.

LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME

Act First

The overture is played by a grand assemblage of instruments. In the middle of the stage is a table, at which the Pupil of the Music-master is composing an air which the Bourgeois has ordered for a serenade.

SCENE FIRST

A MUSIC-MASTER, A DANCING-MASTER,
THREE MUSICIANS, TWO VIOLINS, FOUR DANCERS

MUSIC-MASTER, *to the musicians.*

COME, come in. Sit you there and wait till he arrives.

DANCING-MASTER, *to the dancers.*

And you, too, — on this side.

MUSIC-MASTER, *to his pupil.*

Is it finished?

PUPIL.

Yes.

MUSIC-MASTER.

Let me see; yes, that will do.

Dancing-master.

Is it something new?

Music-master.

An air for a serenade which I told him to compose while waiting for our man to wake up.

Dancing-master.

May I see it?

Music-master.

You 'll hear it, with the dialogue, when he comes. He won't be long.

Dancing-master.

Our occupations, yours and mine, are not to be sneezed at now.

Music-master.

True. We have found a man exactly such as we both wanted. He 's a nice income for us, this Monsieur Jourdain, with the visions of nobility and gallantry he has got into his head; you, with your dancing, and I, with my music, might well wish that all the world were like him.

Dancing-master.

Not altogether; I could wish, for his own sake, he knew something about the things we do for him.

Music-master.

Yes, yes, he knows little, but he pays much; and that 's what both our arts want more than anything.

Dancing-master.

For myself, I own I thirst for glory. Applause inspires me. I hold that in all the fine arts it is a painful trial to exhibit one's self to fools, and to be forced to bear the barbarous ignorance of a stupid fellow as to our compositions. There 's pleasure — and you can't deny it — in working for those who are capable of feeling the delicacies of an art; who know how to sweetly welcome the beauties of our work and, by titillating approbation, to reward its toil. Yes, the most agreeable recompense we can receive for the things we do is to see them understood and cherished by an applause which does justice to us. There is nothing in my opinion which pays better than that for all our efforts. Enlightened praise is exquisitely sweet.

Music-master.

I 'll agree to that. I enjoy it fully as much as you do. Certainly, nothing tickles one so pleasantly as applause. But incense does n't feed us; the purest praise won't give a man a living; you have to mix the solid with it; and the best sort of praise is purse praise. This man of ours is, to be sure, a man whose lights are small, who talks without discernment about everything, applauding where he should n't. But his money corrects the blunders of his mind; his judgment is in his purse, his praises are coins; and this ignorant nobody is worth much more to us, as you know very well, than the enlightened lord who sent us here.

DANCING-MASTER.

There 's certainly some truth in what you say; but I think you dwell too much on money. Self-interest is so low a thing that a man of feeling ought not to show such great attachment to it.

MUSIC-MASTER.

But you take very readily the money which our good man gives us.

DANCING-MASTER.

Of course I do; but I don't place all my happiness on that; and I do wish that with his money he had some little knowledge or taste in art.

Music-master.

I wish so too, and that is just what you and I are trying as best we can to give him. Still, in any case, he affords us an opportunity to get known in the world; he will pay for others what others will praise for him.

Dancing-master.

Here he comes.

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SCENE SECOND

Monsieur Jourdain *in night-cap and dressing-gown,* Music-master, Dancing-master, Pupil, musicians, dancers, lacqueys

Monsieur Jourdain.

Hey? hey? gentlemen, how goes it? Will you show me now your little foolery?

Dancing-master.

Foolery! what little foolery?

Monsieur Jourdain.

Hey? hey! — what do you call it? — your prologue or dialogue of songs and dances.

Dancing-master.

Ah! ah!

Music-master.

You see we are all prepared.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I 've kept you waiting a little because I wished to be dressed to-day like persons of quality; and my tailor sent me some silk stockings I thought I never should get on.

MUSIC-MASTER.

We are here to await your leisure.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I request that neither of you will go away till they bring my coat, so that you may see me —

DANCING-MASTER.

Whatever you wish.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

— equipped in good style, from head to foot.

MUSIC-MASTER.

We do not doubt it.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I had this calico dressing-gown made expressly for me.

DANCING-MASTER.

It is very handsome.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

My tailor tells me that people of quality always dress like this in the morning.

MUSIC-MASTER.

It becomes you wonderfully.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Lacqueys! holà, my two lacqueys!

FIRST LACQUEY.

What is it, monsieur?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Nothing. It was only to see if you heard me. (*To the music-master and the dancing-master*) What do you think of my liveries?

DANCING-MASTER.

They are magnificent.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *opening his gown and showing a pair of narrow red velvet breeches and a waistcoat of green velvet.*

See, this is a little dishabille for the morning, to do my exercises in.

MUSIC-MASTER.

It is very genteel.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Lacquey!

FIRST LACQUEY.

Monsieur.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

The other lacquey!

SECOND LACQUEY.

Monsieur.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *taking off his dressing-gown.*

Hold my gown. (*To the music-master and the dancing-master*) Do you think I look well like this?

DANCING-MASTER.

Very well; you could n't be better.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Now let me see your little affairs.

MUSIC-MASTER.

First, I wish you to hear an air which he (*motioning to his pupil*) has composed for the serenade you asked for. He is one of my scholars, and has an admirable talent for this sort of thing.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Yes, but you should n't have had it done by a scholar; you are none too good yourself for the work.

MUSIC-MASTER.

You must not misunderstand the word *scholar*, monsieur. This kind of scholar knows as much as the greatest masters; the air he has composed is as fine as can be. Listen.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *to his lacquey.*

Give me my dressing-gown to listen in — Stay, I think I'll be better without it. No, give it to me, that will be best.

MUSICIAN, *sings.*

I languish night and day, and weep for woe,
  Since your fine eyes inflict such cruelties;
Fair Iris, if you treat your lover so,
  What fate will overtake your enemies?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

That seems to me rather doleful; it puts one to sleep. I'd like you to make it a trifle merrier here and there.

MUSIC-MASTER.

Monsieur, the air must adapt itself to the words.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I learned a tune that was really pretty, once upon a time. Stop! — how did it go?

DANCING-MASTER.

Faith! I don't know.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

There 's a sheep in it.

DANCING-MASTER.

A sheep?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Yes — ah! this is it: (*Sings.*)

I thought Jeanneton,
Pretty, kind, and sweet;
I thought Jeanneton
Meeker than a sheep.
Alas! Alas!
She 's deep,
And a thousand times more cruel
Than a tiger in his leap.

Pretty, is n't it?

MUSIC-MASTER.

Prettiest thing in the world.

DANCING-MASTER.

And you sing it so well.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I never learned to sing, either.

MUSIC-MASTER.

You ought to learn music, monsieur, as well as dancing; the two arts are in close communion with each other.

DANCING-MASTER.

And open the mind of man to great things.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Do people of quality learn music?

MUSIC-MASTER.

Yes, monsieur.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Then I 'll learn it. But I don't know what time I can take for it; for besides a fencing-master who is to show me how, I have engaged a professor of philosophy and he 's to begin this morning.

MUSIC-MASTER.

Philosophy is something; but music, monsieur, music —

DANCING-MASTER.

Music *and* dancing — music and dancing are the essentials.

MUSIC-MASTER.

There 's nothing more useful to the State than music.

DANCING-MASTER.

There 's nothing so necessary to man as dancing.

MUSIC-MASTER.

Without music a State cannot exist.

DANCING-MASTER.

Without dancing men could n't live.

MUSIC-MASTER.

All tumults, all wars, result from people not having learned music.

DANCING-MASTER.

All the troubles of men, all the fatal misfortunes of which history is full, the blunders of politicians, the failures of great generals, are for want of knowing how to dance.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Why so?

MUSIC-MASTER.

War comes from a want of harmony among men —

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

That 's true.

MUSIC-MASTER.

And if all men learned music, would not that be a means of harmonizing them and bringing universal peace upon earth?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

You are right.

DANCING-MASTER.

When a man has committed a mistake in his behavior, whether in his family, or in the government of a State, or in the command of an army, don't people say: Such a one has made a false step in that affair?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Yes, they say that.

DANCING-MASTER.

Well, making a false step must proceed from not knowing how to dance.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Very true; you are, both of you, right.

DANCING-MASTER.

We want you to understand the excellence of dancing and music.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I understand it now.

MUSIC-MASTER.

Will it please you to see our two performances?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Yes.

MUSIC-MASTER.

As I have already told you, mine is a little attempt made to show what divers passions music can express.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Very good.

MUSIC-MASTER, *to musicians.*

Advance. (*To Monsieur Jourdain*) Be pleased to imagine that they are dressed as shepherds.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Why shepherds? that 's so common.

MUSIC-MASTER.

When we have personages whom we make talk in music we are obliged to take to pastorals. Song has, in all ages, been attributed to shepherds. It is not at all natural that noblemen, or even bourgeois should sing their passions.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Well, well; go on.

DIALOGUE IN MUSIC

A FEMALE MUSICIAN AND TWO MALE MUSICIANS

Female Musician.

A heart in the courts of Love
Is tossed by a thousand fears;
'T is said that we take our ease,
And revel in sighs and tears:
But oh! no, no,
They may say what they please.
There 's nought so sweet as our liberties.

First Musician.

There 's nought so sweet as the tender bond
Which binds two hearts
That are kind and fond.
Earth hath no joy without desire;
Take love from life
And you kill its fire.

Second Musician.

'T were sweet to enter the courts of Love,
And lift one's heart to a heart above,
Were truth and faith repaid;
But alas and alas!
Where can I find a faithful maid?
That sex inconstant, and fickle, and vain,
'T were best to renounce
And peace to gain.

First Musician.

Ardor unutterable!

FEMALE MUSICIAN.

Frankness incomparable!

SECOND MUSICIAN.

Falsehood dishonorable!

FIRST MUSICIAN.

Precious thou art to me!

FEMALE MUSICIAN.

Dear is thy love to me!

SECOND MUSICIAN.

Horror I feel for thee!

FIRST MUSICIAN.

Leave this horror, I pray, unsaid;

FEMALE MUSICIAN.

We will find thee a faithful maid;

SECOND MUSICIAN.

If I meet her my vows are paid.

FEMALE MUSICIAN.

To save our fame
I offer my heart.

SECOND MUSICIAN.

Canst thou convince me,
And faith impart?

FEMALE MUSICIAN.

Try, by experience,
Which of us two can love enow.

SECOND MUSICIAN.

May the gods destroy
Which of us two betrays the vow.

ALL THREE TOGETHER.

'T is rare to meet
With lasting love on mutual ground;
How sweet, how sweet,
It is to meet
When two fond hearts are faithful found!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Is that all?

MUSIC-MASTER.

Yes.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I think it is well enough put together; there are some pretty little maxims in it.

DANCING-MASTER.

And now for my affair. This, monsieur, is an attempt to show the beautiful attitudes and fine movements by which dancing can be varied.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Are these shepherds, too?

DANCING-MASTER.

That 's as you please. (*To the dancers*) Begin.

BALLET.

Four dancers execute the various steps and movements which the dancing-master orders.

END OF ACT FIRST.[1]

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[1] The acts of this play are separated by interludes after the fashion of the classic drama; and as the same personages continue on the stage, it would be easy to make the five acts into one. The "Bourgeois Gentilhomme" is really a play in one act divided by ballets. No other work of Molière's presents this singularity. — AIMÉ MARTIN.

Act Second

SCENE FIRST

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, THE MUSIC-MASTER, THE DANCING-MASTER

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

WELL now, that 's not bad; those fellows frisk about pretty well.

MUSIC-MASTER.

When that dance is given with its music, the effect will be better still; and you will see something really chivalrous in the little ballet we have arranged for you.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

And that will be very soon; the person for whom I am preparing all this is to dine with me to-day.

DANCING-MASTER.

All is ready for the occasion.

MUSIC-MASTER.

But, monsieur, one occasion is not sufficient. A person like you, who is magnificent and has an inclination toward splendid things, should give a concert at your house every Wednesday or Thursday.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Do people of quality give concerts?

MUSIC-MASTER.

Yes, monsieur.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Then I shall give them. Will they be fine?

MUSIC-MASTER.

Undoubtedly. You will need three voices: a treble, a counter-tenor, and a bass, accompanied by a bass-viol, a theorbo, a harpsichord for the continued bass, and a couple of treble-violins to play the air.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Yes, but you must have a trombone. A trombone is an instrument that pleases me; it is very harmonious.

MUSIC-MASTER.

You must let us manage these things.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Well, don't forget to send me musicians who are to play while we are at dinner.

MUSIC-MASTER.

You shall have all you wish.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Above all, the ballet must be fine.

MUSIC-MASTER.

You shall be satisfied, — especially with the minuet.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Ah, ha! the minuet is my particular dance. I want you to see me dance it. Come, dancing-master.

DANCING-MASTER.

We want a hat, monsieur, if you please. (*Monsieur Jourdain takes the hat of his lacquey, and puts it on over his night-cap. Then the dancing-master takes his hands and makes him dance to the time of the minuet, which he sings.*) La, la, la; la, la, la; la, la, la, la, la, la; la, la, la; la, la, la; la, la, la, la, la, la; la la, la, la, la. Keep time, if you please. La, la, la, la, la. Right leg, la, la, la. Don't move your shoulders so much. La, la, la; la, la, la;

la, la, la, la. Your arms look deformed. La, la, la, la, la. Raise your head. Turn out your toes. La, la, la. Straighten your body.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *to music-master.*

Hey! what do you think of that?

MUSIC-MASTER.

It could n't be better.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

By the bye, teach me how to make a bow when I salute a marchioness; I shall have need of it before long.

DANCING-MASTER.

A bow to salute a marchioness?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Yes, — a marchioness, whose name is Dorimène.

DANCING-MASTER.

Give me your hand.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

No, you do it, and let me see how; I shall remember.

DANCING-MASTER.

Well, if you wish to salute her with great respect, you must first bow at a distance, stepping backward; then you advance toward her, making three bows; at the third you bend low, to her knees.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Just do it. (*The dancing-master makes three bows.*) Good.

◆

SCENE SECOND

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, MUSIC-MASTER, DANCING-MASTER, A LACQUEY

LACQUEY.

Monsieur, your fencing-master is here.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Tell him to come in and give me my lesson. (*To the music-master and the dancing-master*) Stay; I want you to see me do it.

◆

SCENE THIRD

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, MUSIC-MASTER, DANCING-MASTER, FENCING MASTER, LACQUEY, *carrying two foils*

FENCING-MASTER, *after taking two foils from the lacquey, and giving one to Monsieur Jourdain.*

Come, monsieur, your salute. Body straight Rest on the left hip a little. Legs not so wide apart. Feet on the same line. Wrist against the thigh. Point of blade at the shoulder. Arm not quite so stiff. Left hand at the height of the eye. Left shoulder well out. Head erect. Eye steady. Advance. Body firm. Touch me the blade in quarte and finish the same. One, two. Recover. Double, firm on the left foot. Backward. When you make a thrust, monsieur, the sword must start first; hold the body well back. Now: One, two. Touch me the blade in tierce and finish the same. Advance. Body firm. Advance. Start from there. One, two. Recover. Double. One, two. Back. On guard, monsieur, on guard! [*The fencing-master makes two or three lunges at him, calling out, On guard!*]

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *out of breath.*

There! what do you think of that?

MUSIC-MASTER.

You do wonders.

FENCING-MASTER.

I have already told you that the whole secret of fencing lies in two things only, — to give, and not to receive; and, as I showed you the other day by demonstrative reason, it is impossible that you can receive if you know how to turn the sword of your opponent from the line of your own body; which depends solely on a little turn of the wrist outward or inward.

Monsieur Jourdain.

And in that way can a man who hasn't any courage be sure of killing his adversary without being killed himself?

Fencing-master.

Quite sure; did you not see the demonstration?

Monsieur Jourdain.

Yes.

Fencing-master.

From that you can judge of the distinguished position we hold in the State, and how the science of fencing stands high above all the other useless arts, like dancing, music, or —

Dancing-master.

Stop, stop! Not so fast, Mr. Swordsman. Speak respectfully of dancing.

Music-master.

Learn, if you please, to treat music properly.

FENCING-MASTER.

You are a pretty couple to compare your sciences with mine.

MUSIC-MASTER.

Just look at his conceit!

DANCING-MASTER.

What a funny animal, with that plastron of his!

FENCING-MASTER.

My little dancing-master, I 'll teach you to dance to another tune. And you, my little music-master, I 'll make you sing small.

DANCING-MASTER.

And I 'll teach you your own trade.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What fools you both are to quarrel with a man who knows quarte and tierce and can kill his enemy by demonstrative reason.

DANCING-MASTER.

I don't care a fig for his demonstrative reason, or his tierce or his quarte.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Gently, gently, I tell you.

FENCING-MASTER, *to dancing-master.*

What! you impertinent little fellow!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Hey! my fencing-master.

DANCING-MASTER, *to fencing-master.*

What! you great coach-horse!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Hey! my dancing-master.

FENCING-MASTER.

If I just fling myself at you —

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Softly, softly.

DANCING-MASTER.

Let me just get my hand upon you —

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

There! there! gently.

FENCING-MASTER.

I 'll give you such a thrashing!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Oh! pray —

DANCING-MASTER.

I 'll rub you down in such a way!

Monsieur Jourdain.

I beg of you —

Music-master.

We 'll teach him to talk!

Monsieur Jourdain.

Good gracious! do stop —

◆

SCENE FOURTH

Professor of Philosophy, Monsieur Jourdain, Music-master, Dancing-master, Fencing-master, Lacquey

Monsieur Jourdain.

Ha! philosopher, you 've come just in time with your philosophy. Please make peace here among these people.

Professor of Philosophy.

What is it? What 's the matter, gentlemen?

Monsieur Jourdain.

They are in a fury about which of their professions is the best; they are insulting each other and want to come to blows.

Professor of Philosophy.

Hey, what a thing that is! Why do you get so angry? Have you never read the learned treatise of Seneca against anger? There's nothing so low and shameful as that passion, which makes a man a brute beast. Reason ought to be master of all our actions.

DANCING-MASTER.

What! when that man comes here and says insulting things to both of us, and despises dancing which is my profession, and music which is monsieur's, are we to say nothing?

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

A wise man is above insult; the grand response that should be made to all such outrage is patience and moderation.

FENCING-MASTER.

They both had the audacity to compare their professions with mine.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Why need that stir your bile? Men ought not to contend over the vain glories and conditions of the world. The qualities which should distinguish us among our fellows are virtue and wisdom.

DANCING-MASTER.

I maintain to his face that dancing is a science to which too much honor cannot be paid.

MUSIC-MASTER.

And I say that music is a science which the the ages have revered.

FENCING-MASTER.

And I tell them, both of them, that the science of fencing is the finest and the most necessary that exists upon this earth.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOHY.

And pray what is philosophy? I think you are all three very impertinent to speak before me with such arrogance, and to impudently give the name of science to things which don't even deserve to be honored with the name of art, — mere pitiful trades, to be classed with wrestlers, fiddlers, mountebanks.

FENCING-MASTER.

Out of here, dog of a philosopher!

MUSIC-MASTER.

Out of here, scoundrel of a pedant!

DANCING-MASTER.

Hence, arrant knave of a jackass!

Professor of Philosophy.

What! rabble that you are! [*The philosopher flings himself upon the others, who pommel him.*]

Monsieur Jourdain.

Oh, professor! philosopher!

Professor of Philosophy.

Infamous wretches, rascals! —

Monsieur Jourdain.

Philosopher!

Fencing-master.

The brute beast —

Monsieur Jourdain.

Gentlemen!

Professor of Philosophy.

Impudent scoundrels!

Monsieur Jourdain.

Professor! philosopher!

Dancing-master.

Booby of a pack-mule! —

Monsieur Jourdain.

Gentlemen!

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Arrant villains! —

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Philosopher!

MUSIC-MASTER.

To the devil with his insolence! —

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Gentlemen!

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Knaves! beggars! traitors! impostors!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Philosopher! gentlemen! philosopher! gentlemen! philosopher!

[*Exeunt the professors fighting.*]

◆

SCENE FIFTH

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, LACQUEY

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Well, well! you may fight as much as you like, I can't help it; and I 'm not going to spoil my dressing-gown by separating you. I should be a fool indeed to stick myself between you and get a knock which might hurt me.

SCENE SIXTH.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY, MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, LACQUEY

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY, *adjusting his collar.*

Now for our lesson.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Ah! monsieur, I am sorry they beat you.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Oh! that's nothing. A philosopher knows how to take things; I shall compose a satire on them in the style of Juvenal, which will tear them to bits in a fine fashion. Let us drop all that. Now, what do you wish to learn?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

All I can. I have the strongest desire in the world to be learned. I am furious with my parents because they did not make me study all the sciences when I was young.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

That is a most reasonable sentiment; *nam, sine doctrina, vita est quasi mortis imago.* You understand that? you know Latin, of course?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Yes; but do as if I did not know it. Explain to me what that means.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

It means that without knowledge life is almost an image of death.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Then Latin is right.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

You know, of course, some of the elements, the beginnings of the various sciences.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Oh, yes; I can read and write.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Where do you wish to begin? Should you like me to teach you logic?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Logic; what is logic?

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

It teaches the three operations of the mind.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What are they, — those three operations of the mind?

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

First, second, and third. The first is to rightly conceive by means of predications; the second is to rightly judge by means of categories; the third is to draw deductions rightly by means of premises: *Barbara, Celerent, Darii, Ferio, Baralipton.*

MONSIEUR JOURDIAN.

Those words are too hard and crabbed. Logic does n't please me. Teach me something prettier.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Should you like to study ethics?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Ethics?

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Yes.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What are they about, — ethics?

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

It is a science which treats of morality, of happiness; it teaches men to moderate their passions, and —

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

No, never mind that. I 'm as bilious as forty devils, and morality won't help it. I choose to get as angry as I please when it suits me.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Perhaps you would rather take physics?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What are they, — physics, I mean.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Physics is the science which explains the principles of natural things and the properties of matter; it reasons on the nature of elements, metals, minerals, stones, plants, animals; and it teaches us the causes of meteors, comets, falling stars, the rainbow, thunder, lightning, rain, snow, hail, wind, and tempests.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Oh, no; too much clatter in all that; there 's neither head nor tail to it.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Then what do you want me to teach you?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Teach me spelling.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

So be it. To carry out your idea and treat this matter philosophically we must begin, according to the order of things, by an exact knowledge of the nature of letters and the different ways of pronouncing them. On that point therefore, I begin by telling you that letters are divided into vowels — so-called because they express the voice — and consonants, called consonants because they sound with the vowels and serve to mark the different articulations of the voice. There are five vowels, or voices, namely: A, E, I, O, U.[1]

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I understand all that.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

The vowel A is sounded by opening the mouth very wide,— A.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

A, A. Yes.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

The vowel E is sounded by bringing the lower jaw to the upper jaw,— A, E.

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[1] The French sound of the vowels must of course be used, { A, E, I, O, U.
R, A, E, O, EU. — [TR.]

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

A, E; A, E. Bless me! How fine that is!

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

The vowel I is formed by bringing the jaws still nearer together, and stretching the corners of the mouth toward the ears,— A, E, I.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

A, E, I, I, I, I. That 's true. Hurrah for science!

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

The vowel O is sounded by opening the jaws and drawing in the lips at the two corners,— O.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

O, O. Nothing could be more true. A, E, I, O, I, O. It is admirable! I, O; I, O.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

The mouth must be opened exactly like a round O.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

O, O, O. You are right. O,— ah! what a fine thing it is to know something!

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

The vowel U is sounded by bringing the teeth near together without precisely joining them, and stretching the lips wider, also bringing them together, but not quite touching them, O, U.

Monsieur Jourdain.

O, U, U; the truest thing that ever was,—U.

Professor of Philosophy.

Both your lips should be stretched out as if you were making a grimace; so that if you should ever want to make a face at any one and ridicule him you have only to say "U."

Monsieur Jourdain.

U, U. True enough. Ah! why did n't I learn that in my youth?

Professor of Philosophy.

To-morrow we will take the other letters, which are consonants.

Monsieur Jourdain.

Are there as many queer things in them as in the others?

Professor of Philosophy.

Undoubtedly. The consonant D, for instance, is pronounced by putting the tip of the tongue against the upper teeth,— D.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

D, D, D. Yes; oh, what fine things! what fine things!

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

F is given by applying the upper teeth outside of the lower lip, — F, F.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

F, F. Most true. Ah! my father and mother, how furious I am with you!

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

R is pronounced by carrying the tip of the tongue to the roof of the mouth; so that the air, coming out with force, rolls over it and pushes it back, making a tremulous sort of sound, — R, RA.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

R, R, RA; R, R, R, R, R, RA. True. Ah! what a clever man you are; and how much time I have lost. R, R, R, RA.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

I will fully explain these singularities to you later.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I beg you to do so. And now I must make you a confidence. I am in love with a lady of high rank, and I want you to help me to write her a little note in which I desire to throw myself at her feet.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Certainly.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

'T would be very gallant, would n't it?

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Undoubtedly. Do you want to write it in verse?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

No, no, not verse.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

You prefer prose?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

No, I don't want either prose or verse.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

But you must have one or the other.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Why?

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Because, monsieur, there is no other way to express ourselves than prose or verse.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Is there nothing but prose and verse?

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Nothing, monsieur. All that is not prose is verse; all that is not verse is prose.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

When we talk, what is that?

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Prose.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What! when I say, "Nicole, bring my slippers, and give me my night-cap," is that prose?

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Yes, monsieur.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Goodness! then I 've been talking prose these forty years without ever knowing it. I am sure I am very much obliged to you for teaching me that. I want to say in my note to this great lady: "Beautiful marchioness, your fine eyes make me die of love." But I want it put in a gallant manner, — turned genteelly.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Exactly. Say that the fire of her fine eyes has reduced your heart to ashes, and that you suffer day and night the tortures of —

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

No, no, no; I don't want all that. I want only what I told you: "Beautiful marchioness, your fine eyes make me die of love."

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

But it ought to be elaborated a little.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

No, no, I tell you. I want nothing in the note except those words; but they must be turned in a way to suit the quality, — arranged with style. I wish you would tell me the different ways in which they can be put; then I can choose.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Well, they can be put, in the first place, as you said yourself: "Beautiful marchioness, your fine eyes make me die of love." Or else: "Of love make me die, beautiful marchioness, your fine eyes." Or else: "Your fine eyes of love make me, beautiful marchioness, die."

Or else: "Die, your fine eyes, beautiful marchionesss, of love make me." Or else: "Me make your fine eyes die, beautiful marchioness, of love."

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Which of all those ways do you think best?

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

The one you said yourself: "Beautiful marchioness, your fine eyes make me die of love."

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

And yet I never studied anything, and I made that all up in a minute! I thank you with all my heart, and I should like you to come early to-morrow morning.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

I shall not fail to do so.

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SCENE SEVENTH

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, LACQUEY

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *to lacquey.*

Has n't my coat come yet?

LACQUEY.

No, monsieur.

Monsieur Jourdain.

That cursèd tailor keeps me waiting on a day when I am particularly engaged. I 'm furious. Plague take him! May a quartan ague get him! Devil of a tailor! if I only had my hands on him I 'd choke him! Dog of a tailor! traitor of a tailor! I 'd —

◆

SCENE EIGHTH

Monsieur Jourdain, A Master-tailor, A Journeyman tailor, *carrying Monsieur Jourdain's coat,* Lacquey.

Monsieur Jourdain.

Ah! here you are. I was just going to get angry with you.

Master-tailor.

I could not come any sooner. I have had twenty men at work on your coat.

Monsieur Jourdain.

You sent me such tight silk stockings that I had the greatest piece of work to get them on; there are two stitches broken now.

Master-tailor.

They will stretch only too much.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Yes, if I burst all the stitches. And those shoes you had made for me, they hurt my feet horribly.

MASTER-TAILOR.

Oh, no, they don't, monsieur.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What! they don't?

MASTER-TAILOR.

No, no, they don't hurt you.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I tell you they do hurt me.

MASTER-TAILOR.

You imagine it.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I imagine it because I feel it; good reason why.

MASTER-TAILOR.

See! this is one of the finest of court-suits; the colors are well-assorted. It is a work of art to invent a serious coat that is not black. I'll give all the most enlightened tailors six chances to do the same.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

But what 's all this? you have put the flowers at the bottom!

MASTER-TAILOR.

You did not tell me you wanted them at the top.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Was it necessary to tell you that?

MASTER-TAILOR.

Of course it was. All persons of quality wear them like this.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Do all persons of quality wear flowers at the bottom?

MASTER-TAILOR.

Yes, monsieur.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Oh, very well then.

MASTER-TAILOR.

If you like, I can put them at the top.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

No, no.

MASTER-TAILOR.

You have only to say so.

Monsieur Jourdain.

No, I tell you, no; you have done right. Do you think that suit will be becoming to me?

Master-tailor.

What a question! I defy a painter with his brush to make you anything more perfect. I have a journeyman who is the greatest genius in the world at making breeches; and another who is the hero of our times at a doublet.

Monsieur Jourdain.

Are the wig and the plumes quite the thing?

Master-tailor.

All just right.

Monsieur Jourdain, *noticing the master-tailor's coat.*

Ah! ah! Mr. Tailor; that is the same stuff as the last coat you made me; I recognize it perfectly.

Master-tailor.

I thought it so fine I wanted a coat of it myself.

Monsieur Jourdain.

Yes, but you had no business to have one like mine.

MASTER-TAILOR.

Will you please to put on your suit?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Yes; give it to me.

MASTER-TAILOR.

Wait, wait. We don't do things in that way. I have brought men to dress you. Such suits as these are put on with ceremony. Holà, there! Enter.

◆

SCENE NINTH

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, MASTER-TAILOR, JOURNEYMAN-TAILOR, FOUR OTHER JOURNEYMEN-TAILORS, LACQUEY.

MASTER-TAILOR, *to his journeymen.*

Put on monsieur's court-suit as you do those of persons of quality.

The four journeymen-tailors, bowing and pirouetting, approach Monsieur Jourdain. Two take off his red velvet breeches; the others remove his green velvet waistcoat; after which, still pirouetting, they put on his new suit. Monsieur Jourdain then walks about among them, showing himself off, to see if the suit fits him.

JOURNEYMAN-TAILOR.

Noble sir, please to give us something to drink with.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What did you call me?

JOURNEYMAN-TAILOR.

Noble sir.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

"Noble sir!" Now, that's what it is to be dressed like people of quality! Wear the clothes of a bourgeois and nobody will call you "Noble sir." (*Gives money.*) Here, take that from your "Noble sir."

JOURNEYMAN-TAILOR.

My lord, we are very much obliged to you.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

"My lord!" oh! oh! "My lord!" Wait one moment, friend. "My lord" deserves something; for it is not a small thing to be called "My lord." Here, this is what "My lord" gives you.

JOURNEYMAN-TAILOR.

My lord, we shall all drink your Grace's health.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

"Your Grace!" Oh! oh! oh! Wait; don't go away. "Your Grace," to me! (*Aside*) Faith! if he goes as far as Highness he'll get all there is in my purse. (*Aloud*) There, that's for My Grace.

JOURNEYMAN-TAILOR.

My lord, we thank you very humbly for your liberalities.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *aside.*

That's fortunate; I was going to give him all.

BALLET.

The four journeymen-tailors rejoice, in dancing, at Monsieur Jourdain's liberalities.

END OF SECOND ACT.

Act Third

SCENE FIRST

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, TWO LACQUEYS

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *in his court suit.*

FOLLOW me while I walk about town to show my suit; and be particular, both of you, to walk immediately behind me, so that everybody may see that you belong to me.

LACQUEYS.

Yes, monsieur.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Call Nicole; I want to give her some orders. No, don't stir; here she comes.

SCENE SECOND.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, NICOLE, TWO LACQUEYS.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Nicole!

NICOLE.

What is it?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Listen.

NICOLE, *laughing.*

He, he, he! he, he!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What are you laughing at?

NICOLE.

He, he, he! he, he, he!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What does the hussy mean?

NICOLE.

He, he, he! How you are rigged up! He, he, he!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What's that you say?

NICOLE.

Ho! ho! my gracious! He, he, he! he, he!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

You are laughing at me, you baggage!

NICOLE.

No, no, monsieur; I'd be very sorry — He, he, he! he, he!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I 'll flick you on the nose, if you laugh any more.

NICOLE.

Monsieur, I can't help it. He, he, he! he, he, he!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Stop, I say.

NICOLE.

Monsieur, I beg your pardon — but you are so funny, and I — I can't help laughing. He, he, he!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What insolence!

NICOLE.

You are so mighty droll like that. He, he!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I 'll —

NICOLE.

Oh, please forgive — He, he! he, he!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Look here! if you laugh one atom more, I swear I 'll box your ears harder than you ever had them boxed in your life.

NICOLE.

There, monsieur, I 've done; it 's over, I sha'n't laugh any more.

Monsieur Jourdain.

Mind you do not. Now, then, I want you to get things ready, and clean —

Nicole.

He, he!

Monsieur Jourdain.

— and clean, in a proper manner —

Nicole.

He, he!

Monsieur Jourdain.

I say clean the salon in a proper manner, and —

Nicole.

He, he, he!

Monsieur Jourdain.

What! again?

Nicole, *tumbling down with laughter.*

There, monsieur, beat me! beat me! but let me have my laugh out; that will do me most good. He, he, he! he, he, he!

Monsieur Jourdain.

I am furious!

Nicole.

Oh, for goodness' sake, monsieur! let me laugh. He, he, he!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

If I catch you —

NICOLE.

Ah, mon-monsieur, I shall bur-ur-urst if I don't laugh. He, he, he!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Was there ever such a jade? — to laugh insolently at my very nose, instead of taking my orders.

NICOLE.

What is it you want me to do, monsieur?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I order you, hussy, to prepare my house for a company whom I have invited —

NICOLE, *picking herself up.*

Oh! faith, I don't want to laugh now. Your companies make such a mess that the very word is enough to put me out of temper.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Do you expect me to shut my doors to society to please you?

NICOLE.

You ought to shut them to some people; I know that.

SCENE THIRD

MADAME JOURDAIN, MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, NICOLE, TWO LACQUEYS

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Ah! ah! here are some new goings-on! What 's all this, husband? Goodness! why are you rigged out in that style? Who ever saw such absurdity? Do you want to be a laughing-stock wherever you go?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

None but fools and foolish women, wife, will laugh at me.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

They have n't waited till now, that 's true; your doings have made everybody laugh for a good long time.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

And who may your *everybody* be, if you please?

MADAME JOURDAIN.

My everybody is everybody who has any sense, and is n't such a fool as you. For my part I am scandalized by the life you lead. One would think it was high carnival every day. I don't know my own house any longer. It is no sooner daylight than the caterwauling of violins and singers begins, till the whole neighborhood is roused by it.

NICOLE.

Madame is right; I can't keep the house clean with that rabble of people you bring into it. They 've got feet that hunt for mud all over Paris just to bring it in here! Our poor Françoise is worn-out rubbing the floors which your shambling company scuffle over every day.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Hey day! servant Nicole; your tongue wags pretty freely for a peasant.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Nicole is right. Her sense is better than yours. I should like to know what you expect to do with a dancing-master at your time of life.

NICOLE.

And that big fencing-man, who comes here and stamps his feet and shakes the house till he has loosened some of the tiles in the salon floor.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Be silent, my wife, and my servant.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Do you want to learn dancing against the time when you have n't any legs?

NICOLE.

Are you wanting to kill anybody?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Silence, I say! You are ignorant women, both of you; you don't know the prerogatives of all that.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

You had better be thinking of marrying your daughter, who is now of an age to be provided for.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I shall think of marrying my daughter when a proper suitor presents himself; meantime I choose to learn fine things.

NICOLE.

They do say, madame, that by way of sauce for his goose he has had a professor of philosophy here this very morning.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Quite true. I desire to possess a mind, and to know how to reason about things when I am in company with intelligent persons.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Had n't you better go to school and be birched?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Why not? Would to God I could be whipped in presence of everybody, if that would teach me what is learned at school.

NICOLE.

Faith! it might straighten you up a bit.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

No doubt it would.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

And it is so very useful in managing your household!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Of course it is. You both of you talk like idiots, and I 'm ashamed of your ignorance. For instance, (*to Madame Jourdain*) do you know, you, what you are saying now?

MADAME JOURDAIN.

I know what I am saying is well said, and you ought to be thinking about leading another life.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I 'm not talking about that. I ask you what are the words you are saying now?

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Words that are sensible, which your conduct is n't.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I 'm not talking about that, I tell you. I ask you: what I am saying to you now, — what is it?

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Stuff and nonsense.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

No, no, no! that is n't what I mean. What we are both saying, — the language we are both using —

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Well?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What is that called?

MADAME JOURDAIN.

It is called what people choose to call it.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

It is prose, ignoramus.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Prose?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Yes, prose. All that is prose is not verse and all that is not verse is prose. Hi! that 's what it is to study. (*To Nicole*) And you, do you know what you must do in order to say U?

NICOLE.

What?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What do you do when you say U?

NICOLE.

What do I do?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Say U, — and then you 'll see.

NICOLE.

Well, there then, — U.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What did you do?

NICOLE.

I said U.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Yes; but when you said U what did you do?

NICOLE.

I did what you told me to do.

Monsieur Jourdain.

Oh! what a singular thing it is to have to do with fools! You stretch your lips out, and bring the upper jaw down to the lower jaw, — U, don't you see ? I make a face, — U.

Nicole.

Yes, that 's fine.

Madame Jourdain.

It 's admirable!

Monsieur Jourdain.

That 's only part of it; you should see O; and D, DA; and F, FA.

Madame Jourdain.

Goodness! what rubbish!

Nicole.

What 's the good of it all?

Monsieur Jourdain.

I am furious when I see such ignorant women.

Madame Jourdain.

Come, come, you ought to get rid of all those fellows, with their ridiculous nonsense.

NICOLE.

Specially that big brute of a fencing-master who stamps all my places full of dust.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Ho! ho! that fencing-master sticks in your throat, does he? I 'll show your impertinence what he teaches me. (*Takes up the foils and gives one to Nicole.*) Here! demonstrative reason. Attention! body in line. When you thrust in quarte, this is what you 've got to do; and when you thrust in tierce, you do so. In that way you can't be killed. It is a fine thing to be sure of what we are about when we fight a man. Now begin; thrust me a little, just to see.

NICOLE.

Well, there! there! (*Nicole gives several thrusts at Monsieur Jourdain.*)

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Holà! stop, stop! ho! gently. Devil take the woman!

NICOLE.

You told me to thrust.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Yes, but you thrust in tierce before you thrust in quarte, and you had n't the patience to let me parry.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

You are crazy, husband, with all your whimseys; and it has come upon you ever since you took to haunting the nobility.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

When I frequent the nobility I show my judgment. It is a much finer thing than frequenting your bourgeoisie.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

It is indeed! and there 's a deal to gain in consorting with your nobles! you 've done a fine business with that count you are so bewitched with.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Peace! reflect on what you say. Do you know, wife, you don't know whom you are talking about when you speak of that gentleman. He is a person of much more importance than you think for, — a great lord much thought of at court, who talks to the king just as I talk to you. Is n't it a most honorable thing to me that a person of such quality should be seen to come here and visit me, and call me his dear friend, and treat me as if I were his equal? He has done me kindnesses that no one has any idea of, and in presence of company he pays me such compliments that I am quite confused.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Yes; he is mighty kind, and he pays you compliments, but he borrows your money too.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Well, and is n't it a great honor for me to lend money to a man of his station? could I do less for a great lord who calls me his friend?

MADAME JOURDAIN.

And this great lord, what does he do for you?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Things that would amaze every one if they knew them.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

But what?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Enough! I cannot explain myself; suffice it to say that if I have lent him money he will return it handsomely, and before long.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Indeed! do you really expect that?

Monsieur Jourdain.

Assuredly I do. He told me so.

Madame Jourdain.

Oh, yes! and he won't fail to do otherwise.

Monsieur Jourdain.

I have his word as a nobleman.

Madame Jourdain.

Stuff and nonsense!

Monsieur Jourdain.

Heyday! you are mighty obstinate, wife. I tell you he will keep his word, I am sure of it.

Madame Jourdain.

And I am sure he won't. All those compliments are only paid to wheedle you.

Monsieur Jourdain.

Hold your tongue; here he comes!

Madame Jourdain.

I dare say he has only come to borrow more money. The mere look of him is enough for me.

Monsieur Jourdain.

Hold your tongue, I say.

SCENE FOURTH

DORANTE, MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, MADAME JOURDAIN, NICOLE

DORANTE.

My dear friend, Monsieur Jourdain, how are you?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Very well indeed, monsieur, and all ready to offer you my little services.

DORANTE.

And Madame Jourdain, whom I find here, how is she?

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Madame Jourdain is as she can be.

DORANTE.

Dear me! Monsieur Jourdain, how well you are dressed.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

You think so?

DORANTE.

You have altogether an air of fashion in that suit; we have no young men at court who are more stylish than you are now.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Hi! hi!

MADAME JOURDAIN, *aside.*

He scratches him where he itches.

DORANTE.

Turn round. Why, you are elegant!

MADAME JOURDAIN, *aside.*

Yes, as silly behind as before.

DORANTE.

On my word, Monsieur Jourdain, I have felt strangely impatient to see you again. You are the man I value most in society. I was speaking of you only this morning in the king's chamber.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

You do me too much honor, monsieur. (*Aside to Madame Jourdain*) In the king's chamber!

DORANTE.

Come, put on your hat.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Monsieur, I know the respect I owe you.

DORANTE.

Never mind that, cover yourself; no ceremony between us, I beg.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Monsieur—

DORANTE.

Put on your hat, I insist Monsieur Jourdain; you are my friend.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Monsieur, I am your humble servant.

DORANTE.

I shall not put on my hat till you put on yours.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *putting on his hat.*

I would rather be uncivil than annoying.

DORANTE.

I am your debtor, as you know.

MADAME JOURDAIN, *aside.*

Yes, we know it only too well.

DORANTE.

You have generously lent me money on several occasions; and you have done me that service with the finest grace in the world.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Monsieur, you are jesting.

DORANTE.

But I know how to pay what I borrow, and to recognize the services that are done to me.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I do not doubt it, monsieur.

DORANTE.

I wish to close up this affair with you, and I have come now to settle our accounts.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *aside to Madame Jourdain.*

There! now you see your impertinence, wife.

DORANTE.

I am a man who likes to settle such affairs as soon as possible.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *aside to Madame Jourdain.*

I told you so.

DORANTE.

Let me see how much I owe you.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *aside to Madame Jourdain.*

Are not you ashamed of your ridiculous suspicions?

Dorante.

Do you remember the exact sums you have lent me?

Monsieur Jourdain.

I think so. I made a little note of them. Here it is (*takes out a memorandum*). Given to you, first, two hundred louis.

Dorante.

That is so.

Monsieur Jourdain.

Another time, six twenties.

Dorante.

Yes.

Monsieur Jourdain.

And another time, one hundred and forty.

Dorante.

You are quite right.

Monsieur Jourdain.

Those three items make four hundred and sixty louis; value five thousand and sixty francs.

Dorante.

Your account is exact; five thousand and sixty francs.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Eighteen hundred and thirty-two francs to your feather-merchant.

DORANTE.

Precisely.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Two thousand seven hundred and eighty francs to your tailor.

DORANTE.

True.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Four thousand three hundred and seventy-nine francs, twelve sous, eight farthings, to your mercer.

DORANTE.

Exactly,— twelve sous, eight farthings; quite right.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

And one thousand seven hundred and forty-eight francs, seven sous, four farthings to your saddler.

DORANTE.

All that is perfectly correct. How much does that make?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Sum total, fifteen thousand eight hundred francs.

DORANTE.

Your sum total is right, — fifteen thousand eight hundred francs. Add to that two hundred pistoles, which you will now give me, and that will make exactly eighteen thousand francs which I will pay you at the first opportunity.

MADAME JOURDAIN, *aside to Monsieur Jourdain.*

Now! did n't I judge him rightly?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *aside to Madame Jourdain.*

Peace!

DORANTE.

Will it inconvenience you to give me the sum I want?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Oh, no.

MADAME JOURDAIN, *aside to Monsieur Jourdain.*

The man is making a milch cow of you.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *aside to Madame Jourdain.*

Hold your tongue.

DORANTE.

If it is inconvenient I can get what I want elsewhere.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

No, monsieur, it is not.

MADAME JOURDAIN, *aside to Monsieur Jourdain.*

He won't be satisfied till he has ruined you.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *aside to Madame Jourdain.*

Hold your tongue, I say.

DORANTE.

You have only to tell me it embarrasses you.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Not in the least, monsieur.

MADAME JOURDAIN, *aside to Monsieur Jourdain.*

He is a regular swindler.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *aside to Madame Jourdain.*

Hold your tongue.

MADAME JOURDAIN, *aside toMonsieur Jourdain.*

He will suck you to the last penny.

Monsieur Jourdain, *aside to Madame Jourdain.*

Will you be silent?

Dorante.

I have many acquaintances who will gladly lend me the money; but as you are my best friend I thought I should do wrong to you if I asked it of others.

Monsieur Jourdain.

You do me too much honor, monsieur. I will fetch the money.

Madame Jourdain, *aside to Monsieur Jourdain.*

What! you really mean to let him have it?

Monsieur Jourdain, *aside to Madame Jourdain.*

How can I help it? Would you have me refuse a man of his station, — a man who spoke of me this very morning in the chamber of the king?

Madame Jourdain, *aside to Monsieur Jourdain.*

You are a perfect dupe.

SCENE FIFTH

DORANTE, MADAME JOURDAIN, NICOLE

DORANTE.

You seem quite melancholy. What is the matter, Madame Jourdain?

MADAME JOURDAIN.

I've a head that is bigger than a fist,—and it is not swollen either.

DORANTE.

And mademoiselle, your daughter, where is she that I do not see her here?

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Mademoiselle, my daughter, is where she is.

DORANTE.

How is she?

MADAME JOURDAIN.

As she ought to be.

DORANTE.

Should you like, some day, to take her to see one of those comedy-ballets they play before the king?

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Ho! indeed; much we want to laugh, and to laugh in that style.

DORANTE.

I think, Madame Jourdain, you probably had many lovers in your young days; so handsome and agreeable as you must have been then.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Tredame! monsieur; is Madame Jourdain decrepit? does her head shake?

DORANTE.

Ah, faith! Madame Jourdain, I beg your pardon; I was forgetting you are young. I am often dreaming. I beg you to excuse my impertinence.

◆

SCENE SIXTH

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, MADAME JOURDAIN, DORANTE, NICOLE

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *to Dorante.*

Here are two hundred louis, carefully counted.

DORANTE.

I assure you, Monsieur Jourdain, I am wholly yours, and I ardently desire to do you some service at court.

Monsieur Jourdain.

I am only too much obliged to you.

Dorante.

If Madame Jourdain would like to see a royal entertainment, I will give her one of the best seats in the room.

Madame Jourdain.

Madame Jourdain takes leave to scorn it.

Dorante, *aside to Monsieur Jourdain.*

Our beautiful marchioness, as I wrote you in my note, will come here to dinner and to see your ballet. I have at last induced her to accept the present you wished to make her.

Monsieur Jourdain.

Come farther away, because —

Dorante.

I have not seen you for eight days, and therefore I could not tell you sooner about the diamond which you placed in my hands to give to her from you. I have had the greatest difficulty in overcoming her scruples, and it was not until to-day that she consented to accept it.

Monsieur Jourdain.

What does she think of it?

DORANTE.

She thinks it perfect; and I am much mistaken if that diamond does not affect her mind most favorably toward you.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Heaven grant it may!

MADAME JOURDAIN, *to Nicole.*

When he once gets with that man he can't leave him.

DORANTE.

I gave her to understand the value of the present, and the greatness of your love.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Those are kindnesses, monsieur, which overwhelm me. I am put to the greatest confusion in the world when I see a person of your quality condescend to me as you do.

DORANTE.

You are jesting. Between friends how can there be scruples? Would you not do the same thing for me if occasion offered?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Oh, assuredly; and with all my heart.

MADAME JOURDAIN, *to Nicole.*

His very presence is a weight on my mind.

DORANTE.

As for me, I consider nothing when I wish to serve a friend; and when you confided to me your passion for that agreeable marchioness, with whom I was already acquainted, you saw that I at once offered to assist your love.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

True; and those are the kindnesses that confound me.

MADAME JOURDAIN, *to Nicole.*

Will he never go?

NICOLE.

They seem to like being together.

DORANTE.

You have taken the right way to reach her heart. Women are particularly pleased with costly attentions; your frequent serenades, your incessant bouquets, those superb fireworks on the water, the diamond she has accepted, the entertainment you are preparing for her, will do more to win her love than all the speeches you could say to her yourself.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

There are no expenses I would not pay if by that means I could reach her heart. A woman of rank has a ravishing charm for me; to receive her in my house is an honor I would buy at any cost.

MADAME JOURDAIN, *to Nicole.*

What can they be saying to each other? Get a little nearer to them, softly, and try to listen.

DORANTE.

You shall presently enjoy the pleasure of seeing her at your ease. Your eyes will have all the time they want to satisfy themselves.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

In order to be completely at liberty, I have arranged that my wife shall dine at my sister's, where she will spend the rest of the day.

DORANTE.

You have acted prudently, for your wife might have embarrassed us. I have ordered for you all the cook will need, and also the things required for the ballet. The ballet is of my invention, and provided the execution carries out the idea, I am sure it will be found —

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *perceives that Nicole is listening, and boxes her ears.*

The devil! you are an impertinent hussy. (*To Dorante*) Let us go out, if you please, monsieur.

◆

SCENE SEVENTH

MADAME JOURDAIN, NICOLE

NICOLE, *rubbing her cheek.*

Hey! madame, curiosity costs something. But I think there's a snake in the grass; they were talking of some entertainment they don't want you to see.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

To-day is not the first time, Nicole, that I have had suspicions of my husband. Either I am most utterly mistaken, or there's some love-affair going on. I am trying hard to find out what it is. But let us think of my daughter now. You know the love that Cléonte feels for her. He is a man who pleases me; I wish to help his suit, and give him Lucile, if I can.

NICOLE.

Indeed, madame, I'm delighted to find you feel that way; for if the master pleases you, the valet pleases me no less; and I should like to have our marriage performed under the shadow of theirs.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Go and find Cléonte; and tell him from me that I wish him to come and see me at once, that we may, together, request my husband to give him my daughter.

NICOLE.

I'll go with joy, madame; I couldn't be sent on a more agreeable errand. (*Alone*) I shall give happiness to more than one, I'm thinking.

SCENE EIGHTH

CLÉONTE, COVIELLE, NICOLE

NICOLE, *to Cléonte.*

Ah! you have come just in time. I am an ambassadress of joy; I am sent to tell you —

CLÉONTE.

Out of my sight, deceitful woman! I do not choose to be fooled again by your treacherous tongue.

Nicole.

Is that how you receive —

Cléonte.

Go away, I tell you; go and tell your unfaithful mistress that never again, as long as she lives, can she impose on this too credulous Cléonte.

Nicole.

What craziness is this? My poor Covielle, tell me what it means?

Covielle.

Your poor Covielle indeed, you little wretch! Quick, out of my sight! and let me alone.

Nicole.

What! you, too?

Covielle.

Out of my sight, I say; and don't speak to me again as long as you live.

Nicole, *aside.*

Heyday! what the mischief has stung them now? I'll go and tell my young mistress this fine tale.

SCENE NINTH

CLÉONTE, COVIELLE

CLÉONTE.

Thus to treat a lover! and the most faithful, the most passionate of lovers!

COVIELLE.

It is a shameful thing that has been done to both of us.

CLÉONTE.

I show to a woman all the ardor, all the tenderness imaginable; I love nothing so well in all the world; I have nought but her within my soul; she is all my care, all my desire, all my joy; I dream of her, I breathe through her, my heart exists in her alone; and behold the reward of so much love! I was two days without seeing her — to me two dreadful centuries; and when I met her, just now by chance, my heart at the sight was all transported; joy shone on my face; I flew to her with delight, and the faithless creature turned away her eyes and passed on hastily, as though she had never seen me in her life.

COVIELLE.

I say the same as you.

CLÉONTE.

Covielle, could anything be found to equal the perfidy of that ungrateful Lucile?

COVIELLE.

Or the treachery of that hussy Nicole?

CLÉONTE.

After the passionate sacrifices and sighs and vows I have made to her charms!

COVIELLE.

After my assiduous attentions and the services I have done for her in her kitchen!

CLÉONTE.

So many tears shed at her feet!

COVIELLE.

So many pails of water drawn from the well!

CLÉONTE.

Such ardor, shown in cherishing her far more than my own self!

COVIELLE.

Such heat endured in turning the spit for her!

CLÉONTE.

She avoids me with contempt.

Covielle.

She turns her back upon me shamelessly.

Cléonte.

'T is a perfidy which deserves the heaviest punishment.

Covielle.

'T is a treachery that should get a hearty cuffing.

Cléonte.

Never, I beg of you, never speak to me in her favor.

Covielle.

I! monsieur? God forbid.

Cléonte.

Never come to me with excuses for that faithless creature.

Covielle.

You need not fear it.

Cléonte.

No; for I tell you that any words in her defence will serve no end.

Covielle.

I should n't dream of it.

Cléonte.

I wish to keep my resentment, and break all ties between us.

COVIELLE.

I consent.

CLÉONTE.

Perhaps this count who is often at the house has struck her eye. Her fancy — I see it plainly — is being dazzled by the quality. But, for my honor's sake, I must forestall the public show of her inconstancy. I wish to make as many steps as she toward the change to which she hastens; I will not leave to her the pride of quitting me.

COVIELLE.

That is well said; I enter, on my own account, into your feelings.

CLÉONTE.

Help on my anger and sustain my resolution against the lingering love that still may speak for her. Tell me, I implore you, all the harm you can. Paint me a portrait of her person that shall make me scorn it; and show me plainly, in order to disgust me, all the defects that you discover in her.

COVIELLE.

In her, monsieur? Ho! an affected minx, a squeamish beauty to win such love as yours! I see nothing in her but what is commonplace;

you could find a hundred other women more worthy of you. In the first place, her eyes are small —

Cléonte.

'T is true her eyes are small, but they are full of fire, — the most brilliant, the most penetrating, the tenderest eyes that were ever seen.

Covielle.

Her mouth is too large —

Cléonte.

Yes; but it has a grace not seen in other mouths; her lips inspire desire; 't is the most winning, the most loving mouth in all the world.

Covielle.

As for her figure, it has no height —

Cléonte.

No; but 't is easy, and well-shaped.

Covielle.

She affects a nonchalance in her speech and actions —

Cléonte.

True, true; but what a grace in that! and her manners, how engaging! They have a charm, I know not what, that wins its way to every heart.

Covielle.

As for mind —

Cléonte.

Ah! she has that, Covielle; the subtlest, the most delicate —

Covielle.

Her conversation —

Cléonte.

Her conversation is full of charm.

Covielle.

She is so serious.

Cléonte.

Who wants a full-blown wit, joys ever beaming? What is there more annoying than a woman who laughs at every word?

Covielle.

But, at least, she is the most capricious creature in the world.

Cléonte.

Yes; she 's capricious; I agree to that; but, 't is becoming to a pretty woman, — we can bear much for beauty's sake.

Covielle.

Well, since it comes to this, I see you want to love her still.

CLÉONTE.

I? I would rather die; I shall henceforth hate her as much as I have loved her.

COVIELLE.

How is that possible, if you persist in thinking her so perfect?

CLÉONTE.

'T is there my vengeance will be signal; my heart can best proclaim its hatred by quitting her, all beautiful, all winning, all lovable as she is. But here she comes.

◆

SCENE TENTH

LUCILE, CLÉONTE, COVIELLE, NICOLE

NICOLE, *to Lucile.*

As for me, I am scandalized —

LUCILE, *to Nicole.*

It cannot be, Nicole, that what you say is true. But here he is.

CLÉONTE, *to Covielle.*

I will not even speak to her.

COVIELLE, *to Cléonte.*

I 'll imitate you.

LUCILE.

What is it, Cléonte? What troubles you?

NICOLE.

What 's the matter, Covielle?

LUCILE.

Has any grief befallen you?

NICOLE.

Has any tantrum seized you?

LUCILE.

Why are you silent, Cléonte?

NICOLE.

Have you lost your tongue, Covielle?

CLÉONTE, *to Covielle.*

But this is shameful!

COVIELLE, *to Cléonte.*

Another Judas!

LUCILE.

I see that our late meeting troubles you.

CLÉONTE, *to Covielle.*

Ah, ha! she sees what she has done!

Nicole.

Our greeting this morning has put you in a huff.

Covielle, *to Cléonte.*

They 've hit the nail.

Lucile.

Am I not right, Cléonte? That is the cause of your vexation, I am sure.

Cléonte.

Yes, treacherous woman, it is — since I must speak. I tell you now you shall not triumph, as you think, in your unfaithfulness. I choose to be the first to break with you; you shall not have the pride of leaving me. Doubtless I shall find it hard to overcome the love I had for you; it may cause me pain; I may suffer for a while; but I shall conquer; and I would rather put a dagger in my heart than have the weakness to return to you.

Covielle, *to Nicole.*

And I say ditto.

Lucile.

But what a trouble about nothing! I wish to tell you, Cléonte, the reason why I avoided you this morning.

CLÉONTE, *attempting to go out, and evading Lucile.*

No, I will not listen to you.

NICOLE, *to Covielle.*

I 'll tell you why we passed so quick.

COVIELLE, *attempting to go out, and evading Nicole.*

But I don't wish to hear it.

LUCILE, *following Cléonte.*

You must know that this morning —

CLÉONTE, *still going out, and not looking at Lucile.*

No, I tell you.

NICOLE, *following Covielle.*

Listen to this —

COVIELLE, *still going, and not looking at Nicole.*

No, traitress!

LUCILE.

Hear me!

CLÉONTE.

Not a word.

NICOLE, *to Covielle.*

Let me tell you —

COVIELLE.

I 'm deaf.

LUCILE.

Cléonte!

CLÉONTE.

No!

NICOLE.

Covielle!

COVIELLE.

Silence!

LUCILE.

Stop!

CLÉONTE.

Deceiver!

NICOLE.

Hear me!

COVIELLE.

Rubbish!

LUCILE.

One moment.

CLÉONTE.

Not one.

NICOLE.

Have patience.

COVIELLE.

Ta-ra-ra!

LUCILE.

Only a word.

CLÉONTE.

No, I say, 't is over.

NICOLE.

Two words.

COVIELLE.

Not one

LUCILE, *stopping short.*

Very well, then; since you will not listen to me, keep your own thoughts, and do as you please.

NICOLE, *stopping also.*

If that 's your behavior, have it all your own way.

CLÉONTE, *looking at Lucile.*

Let me know the reason of such a greeting.

LUCILE, *walking away, and avoiding Cléonte.*

I no longer choose to give it.

COVIELLE, *looking at Nicole.*

Explain the matter a little.

NICOLE, *walking away, and avoiding Covielle.*

Not I; I don't care to explain it now.

CLÉONTE, *following Lucile.*

Tell me —

Lucile, *still walking away, not looking at Cléonte.*

No; I have nothing to tell.

Covielle, *following Nicole.*

Say —

Nicole, *still walking away, not looking at Covielle.*

No; I have nothing to say.

Cléonte.

I entreat —

Lucile.

No, I tell you.

Covielle, *to Nicole.*

For pity's sake!

Nicole.

On no account.

Cléonte.

I implore you —

Lucile.

Leave me.

Covielle, *to Nicole.*

I conjure you —

Nicole.

Out of my sight!

CLÉONTE.

Lucile!

LUCILE.

No!

COVIELLE.

Nicole!

NICOLE.

No, I say.

CLÉONTE.

In the name of all the gods —

LUCILE.

I will not.

COVIELLE.

Speak to me.

NICOLE.

I won't.

CLÉONTE.

Clear up my doubts.

LUCILE.

I shall do nothing of the kind.

COVIELLE.

Cure my pain.

NICOLE.

No, I don't choose to.

CLÉONTE.

Very well, then; since you care so little to relieve me of suffering, or to justify yourself for the unworthy manner in which you have treated my love, you now see me, ungrateful woman, for the last time. I go — far, far from you, to die of grief and love.

COVIELLE, *to Nicole.*

I follow him to do the same.

LUCILE, *to Cléonte, who is going out.*

Cléonte!

NICOLE, *to Covielle, who follows his master.*

Covielle!

CLÉONTE, *stopping.*

Eh!

COVIELLE, *stopping.*

What now?

LUCILE.

Where are you going?

CLÉONTE.

Where I told you.

COVIELLE.

We are going to die.

LUCILE.

Are you going to die, Cléonte?

CLÉONTE.

Yes, cruel woman, since you will it.

LUCILE.

I? I will that you should die!

CLÉONTE.

Yes; it is your will.

LUCILE.

Who says so?

CLÉONTE, *approaching Lucile.*

Is it not willing it, when you do not choose to relieve my suspicions?

LUCILE.

Was it my fault? If you had only listened to me, I would have told you that the greeting you resent was caused by the presence of my old aunt, who thinks that the mere approach of a man dishonors a girl, and is perpetually lecturing us on the subject, and telling us that men are devils from whom we ought to flee.

NICOLE, *to Covielle.*

That 's the whole secret of the matter.

CLÉONTE.

You are not deceiving me, Lucile?

COVIELLE, *to Nicole.*

Ought I to believe you?

LUCILE, *to Cléonte.*

Nothing could be more true.

NICOLE, *to Covielle.*

'T is truth itself.

COVIELLE, *to Cléonte.*

Shall we give in?

CLÉONTE.

Ah! Lucile, how, with one word from your lips, you can soothe the trouble in my heart; how readily we are persuaded by those we love!

COVIELLE.

How easily these young devils can cajole us!

◆

SCENE ELEVENTH

MADAME JOURDAIN, CLÉONTE, LUCILE, COVIELLE, NICOLE

MADAME JOURDAIN.

I am very glad to see you, Cléonte; you are here in the nick of time. My husband is coming in. Seize this opportunity to ask for Lucile in marriage.

CLÉONTE.

Ah, madame, how sweet those words, and how they encourage my desires! Could I receive an order more dear, a favor more precious to me?

◆

SCENE TWELFTH

CLÉONTE, MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, MADAME JOURDAIN,
LUCILE, COVIELLE, NICOLE

CLÉONTE, *to Monsieur Jourdain.*

Monsieur, I have been unwilling to employ others to make you a request I have long meditated. It touches me so closely that I wish to proffer it myself; and, without further circumlocution, I now say that the honor of being your son-in-law is a glorious favor which I ask you to bestow upon me.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Before replying to you, monsieur, I must beg you to tell me whether you are a nobleman.

CLÉONTE.

Monsieur, most men would not hesitate long over that question; the answer would be quickly given. Such men have no scruple in adopting that title, and the customs of the present day seem to authorize the theft. For myself, I will own to you I have feelings in this matter which are somewhat more delicate. I think that all imposture is unworthy of an honest man. It is a base thing to disguise the position in which Heaven has willed that we be born, and to disguise ourselves to the eyes of the world with a stolen title, — in other words, to give ourselves out for what we are not. I am born of parents who undoubtedly held honorable offices; I have myself the honor of having served six years under arms, and I have property enough to maintain a passably fair position in the world. But, with all that, I will not give myself a name to which others in my place would think they had a right, and I tell you frankly I am not a nobleman.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Enough said, monsieur; my daughter is not for you.

CLÉONTE.

What!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

You are not a nobleman, and you cannot have my daughter.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

What do you mean, husband, with your noblemen? Are you and I of the loins of Saint-Louis, I 'd like to know.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Be silent, wife, I expect to see you in the ranks of the nobility.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Don't we both descend from the good old bourgeoisie?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

That 's a slander.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Was n't your father a tradesman, as well as mine?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Plague take the woman! she never misses a chance to annoy me. If your father was a tradesman, so much the worse for him; but as for mine, persons would be very ill-advised who said such a thing. All I have to say to you now is that I insist on having a nobleman for my son-in-law.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Your daughter should have a suitable husband; and it will be far better for her to marry an honest man who is rich and well-made than some beggarly, deformed nobleman.

NICOLE.

That is true. There 's the son of a nobleman in our village who is crooked, and the silliest booby that ever I saw.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *to Nicole.*

Hold your tongue, impertinent girl; you are forever sticking yourself into the conversation. I have property enough for my daughter; what I require is rank and honors for her. I intend to make her a marchioness.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

A marchioness!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Yes, a marchioness.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Alas! God keep us from it.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

That is a thing I am resolved upon.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

It is a thing that I will never consent to. Marriages with those above us are always subject to great annoyances. I don't want a son-in-law who would reproach my daughter with her parents. Neither do I want her to have children who would be ashamed to call me grandmamma. If she came to see me in her fine-lady equipage, and chanced, by mistake, not to bow to all the folks in the quarter, they would tell a hundred ill-natured things about her. "See," they 'd say, "see that marchioness who thinks herself so grand; that 's the daughter of Monsieur Jourdain, who was glad enough to play with us when she was little. She was n't always so high and mighty as she is now; her grandfathers both sold cloth close to the gate of Saint-Innocent. They piled up money for their children, and they may be doing penance for it to this day in purgatory — for people don't get so rich by being honest men." I tell you I don't want to hear such cackle. I want a man who will be under an obligation to me for giving him my daughter, and to whom I can say: "Sit you there, son-in-law, and dine with us."

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Those are the sentiments of a small mind, willing to remain always in a base condition. Make me no further talk. My daughter will be a marchioness in spite of everybody; and if you put me out of temper I 'll make her a duchess.

SCENE THIRTEENTH

MADAME JOURDAIN, LUCILE, CLÉONTE, NICOLE, COVIELLE

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Cléonte, don't lose courage yet. (*To Lucile*) Come, my daughter, follow me, and tell your father resolutely that if you cannot marry Cléonte you will not marry any one.

SCENE FOURTEENTH

CLÉONTE, COVIELLE

COVIELLE.

A fine business you have made of it with your lofty sentiments.

CLÉONTE.

How could I help it? I have scruples on that head that the example of others cannot conquer.

COVIELLE.

It is a great mistake to treat that man so seriously. Don't you see that he is crazy? It would n't have cost you much to give in to his vagaries.

CLÉONTE.

You are right there. But how could I know that I had to give proofs of being a nobleman in order to become the son-in-law of Monsieur Jourdain?

COVIELLE, *laughing.*

Ha, ha, ha! ha, ha!

CLÉONTE.

What are you laughing at?

COVIELLE.

At an idea that has just come into my head of how to trick our man and make him give you what you want.

CLÉONTE.

How?

COVIELLE.

The idea is such a funny one!

CLÉONTE.

But what is it?

COVIELLE.

A certain masquerade has lately been invented which will come in finely here. I 'll produce it, and play a joke on that ridiculous old fellow. It smells a little of farce, to be sure, but no matter; it is safe to risk anything with him; we need n't be too particular. He is sure to play his part in any case, and we can easily make him believe in all the absurdities we choose to tell him. I know the actors in the business. I can borrow their clothes ready made. Let me manage it all.

CLÉONTE.

But explain —

COVIELLE.

Yes, I 'll tell you all. But let us get away now, for here he is, coming back.

◆

SCENE FIFTEENTH

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *alone.*

What the devil is all this? They find fault with me about my great lords, when, for my part, I see nothing in the world so fine as to frequent the company of great lords. There are no honors anywhere, and no civility, except with them. I would gladly give two fingers of my hand to have been born a count or a marquis.

◆

SCENE SIXTEENTH

Monsieur Jourdain, Lacquey

Lacquey.

Monsieur, here comes Monsieur le comte and he is conducting a lady by the hand.

Monsieur Jourdain.

Oh, good God! and I have some orders to give! Say I will be with them presently. (*Exit.*)

◆

SCENE SEVENTEENTH

Dorimène, Dorante, Lacquey

Lacquey.

Monsieur tells me to say that he will be with you presently.

Dorante.

Very good.

SCENE EIGHTEENTH

Dorimène, Dorante

Dorimène.

I do not know, Dorante, why I have taken so strange a step as to allow you to bring me to a house where I know no one.

Dorante.

But where else, madame, can my love entertain you, since, in order to escape remark, you forbid me to do so in your own house or in mine?

Dorimène.

Do you not see that I am insensibly committing myself daily more and more by receiving these great proofs of your passion. In vain I forbid many things; you weary my resistance; and you show a civil obstinacy which makes me, little by little, do all you wish. Frequent visits were the beginning, declarations followed; and after that came serenades and gifts and presents. I have opposed them all, but you will not be rebuffed; and foot by foot you have conquered my resolutions. I can no longer answer for myself, and I believe you will bring me finally to marriage, for which I have had so great an aversion.

DORANTE.

Faith! madame, you ought to have accepted it ere this. You are a widow and wholly independent; I am master of myself, and I love you better than my life; therefore, why will you not from this day forth consent to make my happiness?

DORIMÈNE.

Good heavens, Dorante! — so many good qualities are needed on both sides before two persons can live happily together. The most sensible people in the world often find difficulty in making a marriage that really satisfies them.

DORANTE.

You are mistaken, madame, in imagining such difficulties; the experience that you once had is no ground on which to judge of others.

DORIMÈNE.

I always return to one point: the expenses that I see you incur on my behalf make me very uneasy, and for two reasons: first, because they commit me more than I wish to be committed; and next, because I am sure — not to displease you — that you cannot incur them without serious inconvenience to yourself; and that is a thing which I cannot allow.

DORANTE.

Ah, madame, they are but trifles. It is not in that way that I —

DORIMÈNE.

I know what I am saying. For instance, among other things, this diamond, which you have forced me to accept, is of great price, and —

DORANTE.

Madame, I entreat you, do not set such value on a thing my love thinks quite unworthy of your charms, and suffer me — But here comes the master of the house.

◆

SCENE NINETEENTH

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, DORIMÈNE, DORANTE

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN. *After making two bows he finds himself too close to Dorimène.*

A little farther back, madame.

DORIMÈNE.

How?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

One step, if you please.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN. *A little farther back, madame.*

LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME, Act III., Sc. xix.

VOL. I., Page 272

DORANTE.

Ah, madame, they are but trifles. It is not in that way that I —

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I know what I am saying. For instance, among other things, this diamond which you have forced me to accept, is of great price; and —

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Madame, I entreat you, do not set such value on a thing my love thinks quite unworthy of your charms, and suffer me — But here comes the master of the house.

SCENE SIXTEENTH.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, DORIMÈNE, DORANTE.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN (*after making two bows, and finding himself too near Dorimène*).

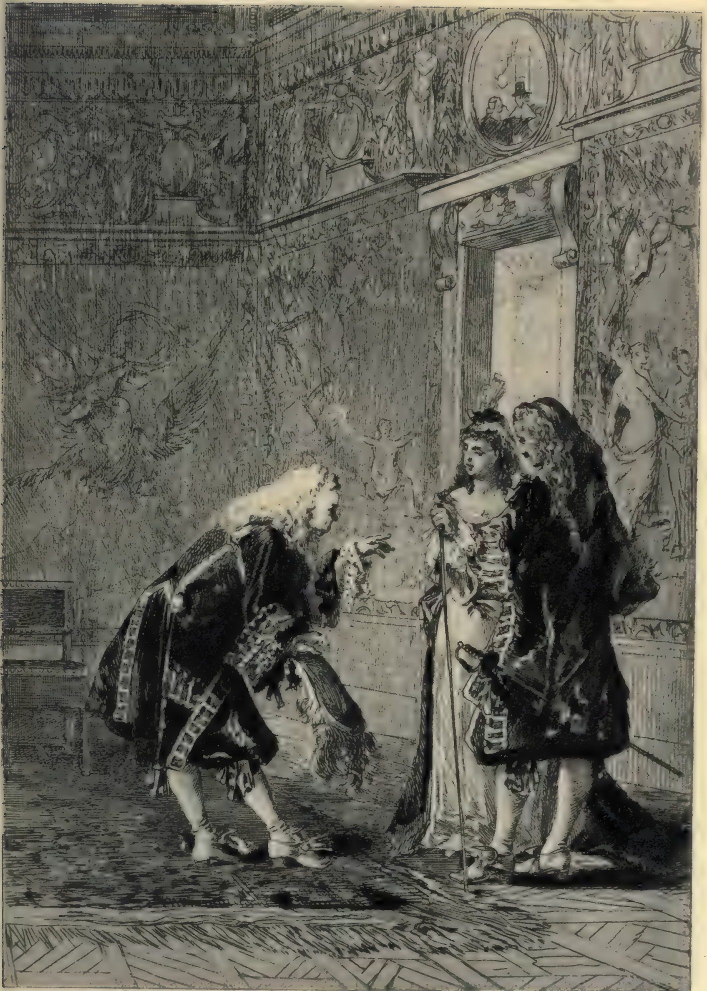
A little farther back, madame.

DORIMÈNE.

How?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

One step, if you please.



DORIMÈNE.

But why?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Draw back a little — that I may make the third.

DORANTE.

Madame, Monsieur Jourdain knows his company.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Madame, it is to me a very great glory to see myself so fortunate, to be so happy, as to have the felicity that you have had the goodness to grant me the indulgence, to do me the honor to honor me with the favor of your presence; and if I had also the merit, to merit a merit like yours, and that Heaven — envious of my happiness — had granted me — the advantage to see myself worthy — of the —

DORANTE.

Monsieur Jourdain, you have said enough. Madame does not like fine compliments and she knows you are a man of parts. (*Aside to Dorimène*) He is a worthy bourgeois, rather ridiculous, as you see, in all his ways.

DORIMÈNE, *aside to Dorante.*

It is not very difficult to see that.

DORANTE.

Madame, this is one of my best friends.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

You do me too much honor, monsieur.

DORANTE.

A gallant man in every way.

DORIMÈNE.

I feel much esteem for him.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I have done nothing as yet, madame, to merit your favor.

DORANTE, *aside to Monsieur Jourdain.*

Take care not to say a word about that diamond you have given her.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *aside to Dorante.*

Could n't I just ask her how she liked it?

DORANTE, *aside to Monsieur Jourdain.*

No! be most careful not to do so; it would be shocking taste. If you wish to act as a man of gallantry you must behave as if it were not you who had given it to her. (*Aloud*) Monsieur

Jourdain is saying, madame, how delighted he is to see you in his house.

DORIMÈNE.

He does me much honor.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *low to Dorante.*

How much obliged I am that you talk to her in that style for me.

DORANTE, *low to Monsieur Jourdain.*

I have had the greatest difficulty in persuading her to come.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *low to Dorante.*

I don't know how to thank you enough.

DORANTE.

He says, madame, that he thinks you the most charming person in the world.

DORIMÈNE.

He is really very gracious.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Madame, it is you who are gracious in doing me the favor to —

DORANTE.

Come, let us think of eating.

SCENE TWENTIETH

Monsieur Jourdain, Dorimène, Dorante, Lacquey

Lacquey, *to Monsieur Jourdain.*

All is ready, monsieur.

Dorante.

Very good; let us sit down to table, and order the musicians to come in.

BALLET.

Six cooks, who have prepared the banquet, dance together; after which they bring in a table covered with viands.

END OF ACT THIRD.

Act Fourth

SCENE FIRST

Dorimène, Monsieur Jourdain, Dorante, three musicians, lacqueys

DORIMÈNE.

WHY! really, Dorante, this is a most magnificent repast.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

You are jesting, madame; I wish it were far more worthy of being offered to you.

Dorimène, Monsieur Jourdain, Dorante, and the three musicians sit down to table.

DORANTE.

Monsieur Jourdain is right, madame, to speak as he does. I am greatly obliged to him for doing the honors of his house so kindly. I agree with him that the dinner is not worthy of you. As I ordered it without consulting the experience of friends, it may not be a well-chosen repast; you will find some incongruities of good living and certain barbarities of taste. Now if our friend Damis had taken part in the affair, all would have been in due form, — elegance and culinary erudition everywhere. He would not have failed to praise, himself, all the dishes that he set before you, and to make you conscious of his high capacity in the science of good food. He would have called your attention to that loaf of bread, baked by itself, with a golden crust on all sides, crisp to the teeth; and to the wine, with a velvety flavor and yet a tartness not too controlling; and to that haunch of mutton, garnished with parsley; that loin of meadow veal, so white and delicate that it eats to the teeth like almond paste; and the partridges, highly seasoned, of surprising flavor; and, for the great feature of all, that soup of barley broth, supported by a plump young turkey, flanked with pigeons and smothered in white onions mashed with chicory. But, as for me, I own my ignorance, and, as Monsieur Jourdain has well said, I wish the repast were more worthy of being offered to you.

Dorimène.

I can only reply to that compliment by eating as you see I am doing.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Ah, what beautiful hands!

DORIMÈNE.

The hands are insignificant, Monsieur Jourdain; you are speaking, I am sure, of the diamond, which is, in truth, very fine.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I, madame? God forbid that I should speak of it! It would not be acting like a man of gallantry; and the diamond is a very poor thing.

DORIMÈNE.

You seem quite disgusted with it.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

You are only too kind to —

DORANTE, *making a sign to Monsieur Jourdain.*

Come, give wine to Monsieur Jourdain and to these gentlemen, who will have the kindness to sing us a drinking-song.

DORIMÈNE.

What a delightful seasoning to good food, to mingle it with music! I am indeed most charmingly regaled.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I assure you, madame, it is not —

DORANTE.

Monsieur Jourdain, let us be silent and listen to these gentlemen, who will enable us to hear something far better than our own words.

FIRST AND SECOND MUSICIANS, *together, glass in hand.*

Drink, friends, drink
For time is flying!
Life is short, there 's no denying;
But here 's the way
To make it gay
And grasp its profits while we may.

SECOND AND THIRD MUSICIANS, *together.*

When we have passed the Stygian shore,
Farewell good wine forevermore;
Haste then to drink
Upon the brink
Of that dark flood where time 's no more.

FIRST AND SECOND MUSICIANS, *together.*

Leave fools to reason as they please
On earth's true joys, and life's true ease;
Wealth, wisdom, fame
Are carking cares;
What earthly joy
With wine compares?

ALL THREE, *together.*

Then drink, friends, drink,
Upon the shore
Of that dark flood where time 's no more!

DORIMÈNE.

I never heard finer singing; it is altogether beautiful.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I see something here, madame, that is far more beautiful.

DORIMÈNE.

Dear me! Monsieur Jourdain is more gallant than I supposed.

DORANTE.

What did you take Monsieur Jourdain for, madame?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I would that she would take me for what I feel to her.

DORIMÈNE

What, more gallantry!

DORANTE.

You do not know him.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

She shall know me, whenever it pleases her.

DORIMÈNE.

Oh! I desist.

DORANTE.

Monsieur Jourdain is a man who always has his repartee at hand. But do you not observe, madame, that he is eating all the morsels that you have touched?

Dorimène.

Monsieur Jourdain enraptures me.

Monsieur Jourdain.

If I could but enrapture your heart, I should —

◆

SCENE SECOND

Madame Jourdain, Monsieur Jourdain, Dorimène,
Dorante, musicians, lacqueys

Madame Jourdain.

Ah! ah! I find company, and I see plainly enough I am not expected. So it was for this fine affair, husband, that you were so eager to send me to dine with your sister? I have just seen the stage-players downstairs, and here I find a banquet fit for a wedding. This is how you spend your money, and feast ladies in my absence; it seems you give them music and comedy while you send me marching.

Dorante.

What do you mean, Madame Jourdain? What foolish fancy is this? Why have you taken it into your head that your husband is spending his money and giving this banquet to madame? Let me inform you that it is I who am doing so; he has only lent me his house for the feast. You ought to look more carefully into the things you say.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Yes, foolish woman; Monsieur le comte is giving all this to madame, who is a person of quality. He does me the honor to use my house and to allow me to be present.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

All that is nonsense; I know what I know.

DORANTE.

Wear better spectacles, madame.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

I don't need spectacles, monsieur, my eyes are good. I have long scented these things, and I am not a fool. It is villanous of you, who call yourself a great lord, to lend a hand as you do to my husband's folly. And you, madame, great lady as you are, it is neither noble nor virtuous to bring dissensions into a home, and to allow my husband to be in love with you.

DORIMÈNE.

What does all this mean? Dorante, you have made a strange mistake to expose me to the silly fancies of this raving woman.

DORANTE, *to Dorimène, who goes out.*

Madame! wait! madame! where are you going?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Madame! Monsieur le comte, make her my excuses; entreat her to return.

◆

SCENE THIRD

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, MADAME JOURDAIN, LACQUEY

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

There, insolent woman that you are! — see your fine doings! You have insulted me before the world; you have driven from my house persons of quality.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

I don't care a fig for their quality.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I don't know what prevents me, confounded woman, from flinging those dishes at your head.

MADAME JOURDAIN, *going out.*

A fig for that, too! I am defending my rights, and I shall have all the women on my side.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

You do well to escape my wrath.

◆

SCENE FOURTH

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *alone.*

She came at a most unfortunate moment. I was just in the humor to say the prettiest things. I never felt myself so full of wit — Why, who 's this?

◆

SCENE FIFTH

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, COVIELLE, *disguised*

COVIELLE.

Monsieur, I do not know if you do me the honor to remember me.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I do not, monsieur.

COVIELLE, *holding his hand near the ground.*

And yet I knew you when you were only so high.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Me?

COVIELLE.

Yes. You were the handsomest child in the world, and all the ladies took you in their arms and kissed you.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Kissed me?

COVIELLE.

Yes. I was a great friend of that true gentleman your father.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

That true gentleman my father?

COVIELLE.

Yes. He was a very worthy nobleman.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What did you say?

COVIELLE.

I said he was a very worthy nobleman.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

My father?

COVIELLE.

Yes.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN

Did you know him well?

COVIELLE.

Extremely well.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

And you knew him to be a nobleman?

COVIELLE.

Undoubtedly.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I don't know what the world is made of!

COVIELLE.

How so?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

There are foolish people who insist that my father was a tradesman.

COVIELLE.

He! a tradesman? That is pure scandal; he never was anything of the sort. What he did in that way was out of kindness, in order to be obliging. As he knew a great deal about fine stuffs, he selected them on all sides and had them sent home; and then he gave them to his friends for money.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I am delighted to know you, and to receive your testimony that my father was a nobleman.

Coviellle.

That I will maintain before all the world.

Monsieur Jourdain.

You will oblige me very much if you will do so. But what has brought you to me now?

Covielle.

Since the time that I knew your late father, that worthy nobleman, I have travelled over the whole world.

Monsieur Jourdain.

Over the whole world?

Covielle.

Yes.

Monsieur Jourdain.

I suppose it is a large country?

Covielle.

Of course. I returned from my long journey only four days ago; and, on account of the interest I have always felt in what concerns you, I have come to bring you some good news.

Monsieur Jourdain.

What news?

Covielle.

You know that the son of the Grand Turk is here?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I? No.

COVIELLE.

What! not know it? He has arrived in the most magnificent style; the world is flocking to see him; he has been received in this country as a lord of great importance.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Faith! I did not know it.

COVIELLE.

And the great advantage to you is that he is in love with your daughter.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

The son of the Grand Turk?

COVIELLE.

Yes; he wishes to be your son-in-law.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

My son-in-law, the son of the Grand Turk?

COVIELLE.

The son of the Grand Turk your son-in-law. As I understand his language perfectly I went at once to see him; he conversed with me, and after some other remarks he said: *Acciam croc* *soler onch alla moustaph gidelum amanahem varahini oussere carbulath;* which means, "Did you ever see a beautiful young woman who is the daughter of a Parisian nobleman, Monsieur Jourdain?"

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

The son of the Grand Turk said that of me?

COVIELLE.

Yes. When I replied that I knew you particularly well, and that I had seen your daughter, "Ah!" he said, "*marababa sahem!*" which means, "Ah! I am in love with her!"

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Marababa sahem means, "Ah, I am in love with her"?

COVIELLE.

Yes.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Faith! you do well to tell me; I never should have thought, myself, that *marababa sahem* meant, "Ah! I am in love with her." What an admirable language Turk is!

COVIELLE.

More admirable than people have any idea of. Do you know what *cacaracamouchen* means?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Cacaracamouchen? No.

COVIELLE.

It means, "My dear soul."

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Cacaracamouchen means, "My dear soul?"

COVIELLE.

Yes.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

But this is marvellous! *Cacaracamouchen,* "My dear soul." But how can I ever say it? That confounds me.

COVIELLE.

So — to fulfil my embassy — he is coming to ask for your daughter in marriage; and, in order to have a father-in-law whose rank is worthy of his own, he wishes to make you *Mamamouchi;* which is a certain great dignity in his country.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Mamamouchi?

COVIELLE.

Yes, *Mamamouchi;* which means in our language "paladin." Paladins were the ancient — paladins, in short. There is nothing more noble in all the world. You will be the equal of the greatest lords of the earth.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

The son of the Grand Turk does me much honor. I beg you to take me to him that I may offer my acknowledgments.

COVIELLE.

On the contrary, he is coming here to see you.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Coming here!

COVIELLE.

Yes; and he will bring everything with him for the ceremony of installing you in your new dignity.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

He is very prompt.

COVIELLE.

His love can bear no delay.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

The only thing that troubles me is that my daughter is an obstinate girl, who has taken it into her head to fancy a certain Cléonte, and swears she will not marry any one but him.

COVIELLE.

She will change her mind after she has seen the son of the Grand Turk. And besides,— here 's a curious coincidence, — the son of the Grand Turk is very like Cléonte, very like indeed. I have just seen Cléonte; he was pointed out to me. The love she has for one can easily pass over to the other, and — But the son of the Grand Turk is coming; here he is.

◆

SCENE SIXTH

CLÉONTE, *dressed as a Turk*, THREE PAGES, *bearing a vestment*, MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, COVIELLE

CLÉONTE.

Ambousahim oqui boraf, Jordina, salamalequi.

COVIELLE, *to Monsieur Jourdain.*

That means: "Monsieur Jourdain, may your heart be at all seasons a blooming rose-bush." 'T is a polite form of speech in his country.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I am the very humble servant of his Turkish Highness.

COVIELLE.

Carigar camboto oustin moraf.

CLÉONTE.

Oustin yoc catamalequi basum base alla moran.

COVIELLE.

He says: "May heaven give you the strength of lions and the wisdom of serpents."

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

His Turkish Highness honors me too much, and I wish him every sort of prosperity.

COVIELLE.

Ossa binamen sadoc babally oracaf ouram.

CLÉONTE.

Belmen.

COVIELLE.

He says that you are to go at once with him and prepare for the ceremony, so that your daughter may afterwards be sent for to conclude the marriage.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

All that in two words?

COVIELLE.

Yes. The Turkish language is made like that; it says much in few words. Go with him at once, as he wishes.

SCENE SEVENTH

COVIELLE, *alone.*

Ha, ha, ha! Faith, if that is n't droll! What a dupe! He could n't play his part better if he had learned it by heart. Ha, ha, ha!

◆

SCENE EIGHTH

DORANTE, COVIELLE

COVIELLE.

Monsieur, I beg you to help us in a matter we are carrying on just now in this house.

DORANTE.

Ha, Covielle; who would recognize you? How you are disguised!

COVIELLE.

Yes, you see. Ha, ha, ha! ha, ha!

DORANTE.

What are you laughing at?

COVIELLE.

At something fit to make one laugh, monsieur.

DORANTE.

What is it?

COVIELLE.

I 'll give you a dozen guesses, monsieur, to find out the stratagem we are playing off on Monsieur Jourdain, in order to bring him round to give his daughter to my master.

DORANTE.

I can't guess the stratagem; but I am pretty sure it will not fail to do its work if you undertake it, Covielle.

COVIELLE.

You know what a blockhead he is?

DORANTE.

Explain the trick to me.

COVIELLE.

Then come a little aside, so as to leave space for the scene which is just about to take place. You shall see part of the business, and I 'll tell you the rest.

SCENE NINTH

THE MUFTI, DERVISHES, TURKS, *assistants of the Mufti, dancing and singing*

Six Turks enter gravely, two and two, to the sound of instruments. They carry three carpets, which, after making several figures in dancing, they raise very high.

Other Turks, singing and dancing, pass beneath these carpets, and then take their station on each side of the stage. The Mufti, followed by the Dervishes, brings up the rear.

Then the six Turks spread their carpets on the ground and kneel upon them. The Mufti and the Dervishes stand erect in their midst; and while the Mufti invokes Mohammed, by making many contorsions and grimaces without uttering a word, the assistant Turks prostrate themselves on the ground, chanting "Allah!" then they rise and lift their arms to heaven, still chanting "Allah!" which movements they continue till the end of the invocation.

After which all rise, chanting "Allah akbar!" and two of the Dervishes go out to fetch Monsieur Jourdain.

SCENE TENTH[1]

The Mufti, Dervishes, Turks, *singing and dancing;* **Monsieur Jourdain,** *dressed in the Turkish fashion, his head shaved, without turban or scimitar*

The Mufti, *to Monsieur Jourdain.*

Se ti sabir,
Ti respondir;
Se no sabir,
Tazir, tazir.

Mi star mufti
Ti qui star si?
Non intendir
Tazir, tazir.

Two Dervishes draw Monsieur Jourdain aside.

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[1] This scene is in the Lingua Franca, which was spoken along the shores of the Mediterranean and in the Barbary States. It is a mixture of Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese dialects, in which the verb is used in the infinitive only. A few Turkish words are given, which mean as follows: *Yoc,* no. *Allah Akbar,* God is great. *Ei Vallah* (Arabic), yes, by God. *Allah,* God; *Baba,* my father; *Hoo* (Arabic) He, meaning God. The nineteenth century does not need a translation of this scene any more than an audience of the seventeenth century did. — Tr.

SCENE ELEVENTH

THE MUFTI, DERVISHES, TURKS, *singing and dancing*

THE MUFTI.

Dice, Turque, qui star quista? Anabatista? Anabatista?

THE TURKS.

Yoc.

THE MUFTI.

Zuinglista?

THE TURKS.

Yoc.

THE MUFTI.

Coffita?

THE TURKS.

Yoc.

THE MUFTI.

Hussita? Morista? Fronista?

THE TURKS.

Yoc, yoc, yoc.

THE MUFTI.

Yoc, yoc, yoc. Star pagana?

THE TURKS.

Yoc.

THE MUFTI.

Luterana?

THE TURKS.

Yoc.

THE MUFTI.

Puritana?

THE TURKS.

Yoc.

THE MUFTI.

Bramina? Moffina? Zurina?

THE TURKS.

Yoc, yoc, yoc.

THE MUFTI.

Yoc, yoc, yoc. Mahametana? Mahametana?

THE TURKS.

Ei Vallah! Ei Vallah!

THE MUFTI, *twirling.*

Como chamara? Como chamara?

THE TURKS.

Giourdina, Giourdina.

THE MUFTI.

Giourdina, Giourdina.

THE TURKS.

Giourdina, Giourdina.

THE MUFTI.

Mahameta, per Giourdina,
Mi pregar, sera e matina.
Voler far un paladina
De Giourdina, de Giourdina;
Dar turbanta, dar scarrina,
Con galera, e brigantina,
Per deffender Palestina,
Mahameta, per Giourdina,
Mi pregar, sera e matina.

(*To the Turks*)

Star bon Turca Giourdina?

THE TURKS.

Ei Vallah! Ei Vallah!

THE MUFTI, *exit singing and dancing.*

Al, lah, Ba, ba, Hoo; Al, lah, Ba, ba!

THE TURKS.

Al, lah, Ba, ba, Hoo; Al, lah, Ba, ba!

◆

SCENE TWELFTH

TURKS, *singing and dancing*

SCENE THIRTEENTH

THE MUFTI, DERVISHES, MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, TURKS, *singing and dancing*

The Mufti returns, wearing his turban of ceremony, which is of inordinate size, adorned with lighted tapers disposed in four or five rows. He is accompanied by two Dervishes, who carry the Koran and wear pointed caps, also adorned with lighted tapers.

Two other Dervishes lead in Monsieur Jourdain and place him on his knees, his hands on the ground, so that his back, on which they lay the Koran, serves as a pulpit for the Mufti, who makes a second invocation, frowning his eyebrows, striking the Koran from time to time, and turning the leaves precipitately; after which, raising his arms to heaven, the Mufti cries in a loud voice: "Hoo!"

During this second invocation the assistant Turks, bowing down and rising alternately, also chant "Hoo! hoo! hoo!"

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *after they have taken the Koran from his back.*

Ouf!

THE MUFTI, *to Monsieur Jourdain.*

Ti non star furba?

THE TURKS.

No, no, no.

THE MUFTI, *to Monsieur Jourdain.*

Non star forfanta?

THE TURKS.

No, no, no.

THE MUFTI, *to the Turks.*

Dona turbanta.

THE TURKS.

Ti non star furba?
No, no, no.
Non star forfanta?
No, no, no.
Dona turbanta.

The Turks, dancing around Monsieur Jourdain, put the turban on his head to the sound of instruments.

THE MUFTI, *giving a scimitar to Monsieur Jourdain.*

Ti star nobile, non star fabbola.
Pigliar schiabbola.

THE TURKS, *drawing their scimitars.*

Ti star nobile, non star fabbola.
Pigliar schiabbola.

The Turks, dancing, give several blows with their scimitars in cadence to Monsieur Jourdain.

THE MUFTI.

Dara, dara,
Bastonnara.
Dara, dara,
Bastonnara.

The Turks, dancing, give several blows with a stick to Monsieur Jourdain.

THE MUFTI.

Non tener honta,
Questa star l'ultima affronta.

THE TURKS.

Non tener honta,
Questa star l'ultima affronta.

The Mufti begins a third invocation. The Dervishes support him beneath the arms with respect; after which the Turks, singing, dancing and twirling round the Mufti, retire with him and lead away Monsieur Jourdain.

END OF FOURTH ACT.

Act Fifth

SCENE FIRST

MADAME JOURDAIN, MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *dressed as a Turk*

MADAME JOURDAIN.

GREAT Powers, have mercy! What is all this? What a guy! Is that a pillow on your head? Are you playing a masquerade? Speak, tell me what this means. Who has rigged you out like that?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What impertinence to speak in that way to a *Mamamouchi*.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

A what?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Yes, respect must be shown to me; I have just been made a *Mamamouchi*.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

What do you mean with your *Mamamouchi*?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Mamamouchi, I tell you. I am *Mamamouchi.*

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Is it an animal?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Mamamouchi, which means, in our language, "paladin."

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Baladin! are you going to dance a ballet at your time of life?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What ignorance! I said, "paladin." It is a dignity to which I have been raised by a ceremony.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

What ceremony?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Mahameta per Jordina.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Good heavens! what does he mean?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Jordina means "Jourdain."

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Well, what? Jourdain what?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Voler far un paladina de Jordina.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

How?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Dar turbanta con galera.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

What does that say, that?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Per deffender Palestina.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Heavens! what do you mean?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Dara, dara, bastonnara.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Whose jargon is that?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Non tener honta questa star l'ultima affronta.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

For Heaven's sake, tell me what you mean?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *singing and dancing.*

Hoo, la, ba! ba, la, hoo! ba, la, ba! ba, la, da! (*Falls to the ground.*)

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Good God! my husband is mad!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *rising and departing.*

Peace, insolent woman! show respect to the *Mamamouchi.*

MADAME JOURDAIN, *alone.*

He certainly has lost his mind! I must go after him and prevent his leaving the house. (*Seeing Dorimène and Dorante approaching*) Ah! ah! here's the last drop; I see nothing but trouble everywhere.

◆

SCENE SECOND

DORANTE, DORIMÈNE

DORANTE.

Yes, madame, you shall see the most amusing thing that ever was seen. I don't believe that in all the world it would be possible to find another such fool as this man. Besides, madame, we must try to serve Cléonte's love and help him with his masquerade. He is a very gallant young man, and deserves that we take an interest in him.

DORIMÈNE.

I think very highly of him; he is worthy of good fortune.

DORANTE.

Moreover, madame, you must indeed see the ballet I have prepared. We ought not to lose it; I wish to know if my idea has been successfully carried out.

DORIMÈNE.

I have noticed the magnificent preparations you have made, Dorante; and these are things that I can no longer permit. Yes, I must in future prevent your profusion; and to stop the expenses which I see you incurring for me I have resolved to marry you at once. That is the only way; for such extravagance ends with marriage, as you know.

DORANTE.

Ah! madame, is it possible you have come to so sweet a resolution?

DORIMÈNE.

It is solely to prevent you from ruining yourself; for I see plainly that unless I do this you will soon be left without a sou.

DORANTE.

How deeply obliged I am, madame, for the care you take to preserve my property. It is wholly yours, as well as my heart; use it in any way you please.

◆

SCENE THIRD

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, DORIMÈNE, DORANTE

DORANTE.

Monsieur, we have come, madame and I, to render homage to your new dignity, and to rejoice with you at the marriage you are making between your daughter and the son of the Grand Turk.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *after bowing in the Turkish manner.*

Monsieur, I wish you the strength of serpents and the wisdom of lions.

Dorimène.

I am very glad to be the first, monsieur, to congratulate you on the high degree of glory to which you have risen.

Monsieur Jourdain.

Madame, I wish that your rosebush may bloom all the year round. I am infinitely obliged to you for taking part in the honors that have come to me. I am full of joy at your return to my house, and I offer you my very humble excuses for the unreasonableness of my wife.

Dorimène.

Do not mention it; I can readily excuse such feelings in Madame Jourdain; your heart must be precious to her. It is not strange that the possession of a man like you should inspire some anxiety.

Monsieur Jourdain.

The possession of my heart is yours alone.

Dorante.

You see, madame, that Monsieur Jourdain is not one of those whom prosperity blinds; he knows in his grandeur how to recognize his friends.

DORIMÈNE.

'T is the sign of a truly generous soul.

DORANTE.

Where is his Turkish Highness? We desire, as your friends, to pay him our respects.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Here he comes: I have sent for my daughter, to bestow her hand upon him.

◆

SCENE FOURTH

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, DORIMÈNE, DORANTE, CLÉONTE, *dressed as a Turk*

DORANTE, *to Cléonte.*

Monsieur, we have come to offer homage to your Highness as the friends of Monsieur Jourdain, your father-in-law, and to assure you with all respect of our very humble services.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Where is that interpreter! He is wanted to tell him who you are and to make him understand what you say. You will see that he will answer you; he speaks Turk admirably. Holà, where the devil has he gone? (*To Cléonte*) *Strouf, strif, strof, straf.* Monsieur, here is a *grande signore, grande signore, grande signore;* and madame is a *granda dama, granda dama.* (*Seeing that he does not make himself understood*) Ah! (*To Cléonte, pointing to Dorante*) Monsieur, he *Mamamouchi* frenchy; and Madame *Mamamouchia* frenchy. I can't say it more clearly. Oh! good; here comes the interpreter.

◆

SCENE FIFTH

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, DORIMÈNE, DORANTE, CLÉONTE, *dressed as a Turk,* COVIELLE, *disguised*

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *to Covielle.*

Where have you been? We can't say a word without you. (*Pointing to Cléonte*) Just tell him that monsieur and madame here are persons of high quality, who have come to pay him their respects as friends of mine, and to assure him of their services. (*To Dorimène and Dorante*) You will see how he will answer.

COVIELLE.

Alabala crociam acci boram alabamen.

CLÉONTE.

Catalequi tubal ourin soter amalouchan.

Monsieur Jourdain, *to Dorante and Dorimène.*

There! you see.

Covielle.

He says: "May the rain of prosperity ever water the garden of your friends."

Monsieur Jourdain.

I told you he spoke Turk.

Dorante.

Admirably!

◆

SCENE SIXTH

Lucile, Cléonte, Monsieur Jourdain, Dorimène, Dorante, Covielle

Monsieur Jourdain.

Approach, my daughter; come here and give your hand to monsieur, who does you the honor to ask you in marriage.

Lucile.

Why, father! how you are dressed! Are you acting a comedy?

Monsieur Jourdain.

No, this is not a comedy; it is a very serious matter; and the greatest honor to you that heart could wish. (*Pointing to Cléonte*) This is the husband whom I give to you.

Lucile.

To me, father.

Monsieur Jourdain.

Yes, to you. Come, put your hand in his and thank Heaven for your great good fortune.

Lucile.

I do not wish to marry.

Monsieur Jourdain.

I wish it, — I, who am your father.

Lucile.

I shall not do so.

Monsieur Jourdain.

Ha! what a fuss! Come, I say; here! your hand.

Lucile.

No, father; I told you no power could induce me to take any other husband than Cléonte; I will go to all extremities rather than — (*Recognizing Cléonte*) It is true you are my father; I owe you entire obedience, — and it is your right to bestow my hand as you will.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Ah! I am delighted to see you return so quickly to your duty. It gratifies me very much to have an obedient daughter.

◆

SCENE SEVENTH

MADAME JOURDAIN, CLÉONTE, MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, LUCILE, DORANTE, DORIMÈNE, COVIELLE

MADAME JOURDAIN.

What is this I hear? They say you are going to give your daughter in marriage to a carnival-actor.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Will you be silent, meddling woman? You always come and mix your folly in everything. Is there no way to teach you to be reasonable?

MADAME JOURDAIN.

It is you to whom there 's no way to teach common-sense; you go from one folly to another. What is your present scheme? and why have you collected these people here?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I intend to marry our daughter to the son of the Grand Turk.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

The son of the Grand Turk!

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *pointing to Covielle.*

Yes, pay him your respects through the interpreter whom you see here.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

I don't want any interpreter. I can tell him to his nose, myself, what I have to say; and that is, that he shall not have my daughter.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Will you be silent, I say again.

DORANTE.

Why, Madame Jourdain, how can you oppose an honor like this? Would you refuse his Turkish Highness for a son-in-law?

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Heavens! monsieur, mind your own business.

DORIMÈNE.

But it is a great glory that ought not to be rejected.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Madame, I beg you not to trouble yourself about that which does not concern you.

DORANTE.

It is because we are so truly your friends that we take an interest in your good fortune.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

I can do very well without your friendship.

DORANTE.

But here 's your daughter, who consents to her father's wishes.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

My daughter consents to marry a Turk?

DORANTE.

She does.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

She forgets Cléonte?

DORANTE.

What will a woman *not* do to make herself a great lady.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

I 'll strangle her with my own hands if she can do so base a thing.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Here 's fine cackling! I tell you the marriage will take place.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

And I tell you it shall not take place.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

What a fuss!

LUCILE.

Mother!

MADAME JOURDAIN.

You are a hussy.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *to Madame Jourdain.*

What! do you quarrel with her because she obeys me?

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Yes; she is mine quite as much as she is yours.

COVIELLE, *to Madame Jourdain.*

Madame!

MADAME JOURDAIN.

What do you want, you?

COVIELLE.

One word.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

I don't choose to hear your word.

COVIELLE, *to Monsieur Jourdain.*

Monsieur, if she will only listen to me one moment privately, I know I can make her consent to what you wish.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

I shall never consent.

COVIELLE.

Just listen to me a moment.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

No.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Listen to him.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

I don't choose to listen to him.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

He will tell you —

MADAME JOURDAIN.

I don't want him to tell me anything.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Was there ever such female obstinacy! It can't hurt you to listen to him.

COVIELLE.

Only listen; you can do as you like afterwards.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

Well, what is it, then?

COVIELLE, *low to Madame Jourdain.*

We have been making signs to you for an hour, madame. Don't you see that all this is done to adapt ourselves to your husband's notions? We are tricking him under this disguise. Cléonte is the son of the Grand Turk.

MADAME JOURDAIN, *low to Covielle.*

What, really?

COVIELLE, *low to Madame Jourdain.*

And I, Covielle, am the interpreter.

MADAME JOURDAIN, *low to Covielle.*

If that 's the case I give in.

COVIELLE, *low to Madame Jourdain.*

But be careful not to betray the trick.

MADAME JOURDAIN, *aloud.*

Well, as the thing is done, I consent to the marriage.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

Ah! now, here's everybody reasonable. (*To Madame Jourdain*) You would n't listen to him, but I knew very well that he would explain to you about the son of the Grand Turk.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

He has explained it all properly, and I am satisfied. Now we had better send at once for a notary.

DORANTE.

Well said. And in order, Madame Jourdain, that you may have your mind altogether at rest, and lose from this moment the jealousy you have felt about your husband, Madame la marquise and I will avail ourselves of the services of the same notary to arrange our marriage.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

I consent to that, too.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *low to Dorante.*

That is only to pacify my wife, of course.

DORANTE, *low to Monsieur Jourdain.*

It is well to amuse her with the idea.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, *low.*

Good! good! (*Aloud*) Yes, send for the notary.

DORANTE.

And while we are waiting for him let us see our ballet and offer it as an entertainment to his Turkish Highness.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

An excellent idea. Come, let us take our places.

MADAME JOURDAIN.

And Nicole?

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN.

I give her to the interpreter — (*low*) and my wife to any one who wants her.

COVIELLE.

Monsieur, I thank you. (*Aside*) May I be shot if he is not the craziest of mortals.

BALLET.

The comedy ends with the little ballet which had been prepared, in which musicians of the three countries, Italy, France, and Spain, sing and dance in their native style and manner.

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The whole concludes by the mingling of the three nations, and the applause, in dance and song, of all present, assistants and spectators, who sing:—

What visions charm us, and what pleasures greet;
The gods, the gods themselves have nought so sweet!

END OF LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME.

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1825.
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Molière, Jean Baptiste
Poquelin de,
1622-1673.
The plays of Molie`re